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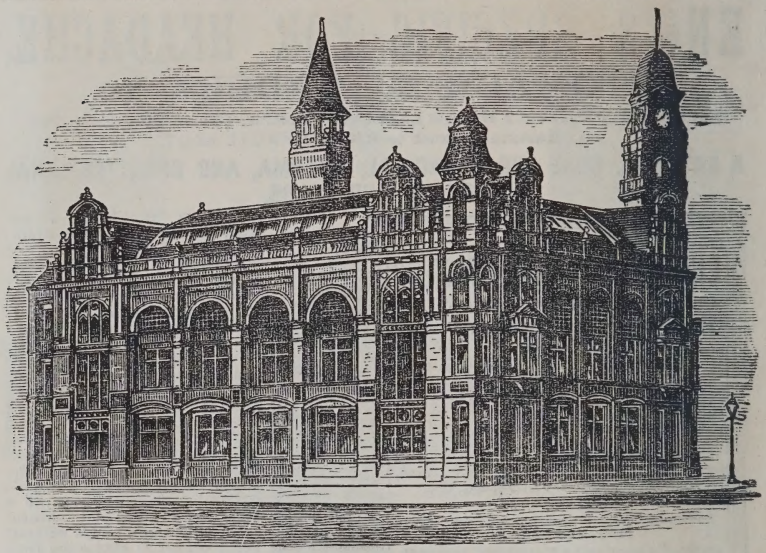

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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Anna K. Green is an American writer of the sensational school. She is now Mrs Rohlfs. She was born at Brooklyn in 1846, and was married in 1884.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

BY

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

AUTHOR OF

"THE LEAVENWORTH CASE," "THE MILL MYSTERY," ETC., ETC.

AUTHOR'S COPYRIGHT EDITION

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

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1888

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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS.

BOOK I.

THE GRETOREX WEDDING.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

It was Dr. Cameron's wedding-day. At eight o'clock in the evening the ceremony of marriage between himself and Genevieve Gretorex was to be performed at the house of the bride's parents in St. Nicholas Place. It was now four o'clock.

Seated in his office, Dr. Cameron, who for a young man enjoyed a most enviable reputation as a physician, mused over his past and built castles for the future; for his bride was the daughter of one of the richest and most influential citizens of New York, and to such ambition as his, this fact, implying as it did valuable connections in the present, and a large and unencumbered fortune in the future, was one that lent lustre to her beauty and attraction to their union. Not but what he loved her—or thought he did—would have loved her under any circumstances. Was she not handsome, and in that reserved and somewhat haughty way he especially admired? Had she not fine manners, and would she not add increased honour to a name already well known and, as he might add, respected? To be sure she had her caprices, as a woman so circumstanced had a right to have, and she esteemed rather

than adored him, as many little events in their short courtship only too plainly betrayed. But then he would not have admired a gushing bride, and being what he was, a man of taste and the son of a man of taste, he found a certain satisfaction in the calm propriety of a match that united equal interests, without jeopardizing that calmness of mind necessary to the successful practice of his exacting profession. There was but one thing troubled him. Why had she refused to see him for the last seven days? She was not a woman of petty instincts. Indeed he had sometimes suspected her of possessing latent energies which the round of a fashionable life had never called forth; and in her cool and somewhat languid gaze he had caught glimpses now and then of a spirit that only needed light and air to expand into something like greatness. Why then this strange desire for seclusion at a time when a woman is usually supposed to desire the support of her lover's society? Had he displeased her? He could not think so. Not only had his presents been rich, they had been rare and of an order to gratify her refined taste. Was she ill? He was her physican as well as lover, and he had not been notified of any indisposition. Besides, the last time he had been so fortunate as to be received into her presence, she had seemed well and looked blooming; more so, indeed, than he had seen her for some time; and though somewhat nervous in manner, had exhibited an interest in his attentions which he had not always observed in her. It was not a long interview, but he remembered it well; saw again the almost timid look with which she greeted him, followed by the smile that was nearly a shock to him, it was so much warmer and brighter than usual. Then the few hurried words—for even that night she would not see him long—and the sudden coyness of her attitude as he took her hand in parting!—he recollected it all. He had not thought of it at the time, but now it seemed to him that there had been something strange in her whole bearing, an impalpable change from her former self that he could not analyze, but which had nevertheless left its impression upon him. The kiss he had received, for instance, had moved him. There had been warmth in it, and her lips had almost returned the pressure of his own.

This was new in the history of their courtship, and would have argued, perhaps, that she was beginning to recognize his

appreciation of her, if her after conduct had not given the lie to any such surmise. As it was, it rather seemed to show that she had been in an unnatural condition—suggestive of incipient fever, perhaps. She was ill; and they were trying to keep it from him! The butler's excuses, "Miss Gretorex is very much engaged, sir;" "Mrs. Gretorex's regrets, sir, but Miss Gretorex has gone out on important business," were but polite subterfuges to blind his eyes to the real truth. And yet to his calmer judgment how untenable was even this supposition! Had she been sick he could not have failed to have heard of it from some quarter. No, she was not sick. She was but indulging in a freak easily to be explained, perhaps, by her mother's over-exacting code of etiquette; and as in a few hours she was to be his wife and life-long companion, he would cease to think of it, and only remember that kiss——

He had reached this point in his musings when they were suddenly interrupted. A tap was heard on his office door.

With some irritation he arose. It was not time for his carriage, and he had expressly ordered that no visitors or patients were to be received. Who could it be, then? A messenger from Miss Gretorex? He sprang to the door at the thought. But before he could touch the knob, the door opened, and to his surprise and possible relief there entered an unknown man of middle age and prepossessing appearance, whose errand seemed to be one of importance, though his manner was quiet and his voice startlingly gentle.

"I hope I am not intruding," said he. "The boy below told me this was your wedding-day, but he also told me that the ceremony was not to take place till eight o'clock this evening, and as my business is peculiar and demands instant attention, I ventured to come up."

"That is right," answered Dr. Cameron, feeling an unaccountable attraction towards the man, though he was not what you would perhaps call a gentleman, and had, as the doctor could not but notice even at this early stage of their acquaintance, a way of not meeting your eye when he spoke that was, to say the least, lacking in ingenuousness. "Is it as a patient you come to me?"

"No," rejoined the stranger, fixing his glance on the white necktie and one or two other insignificant articles which lay on the table near by, with an air strangely like that of com-

passion. "My business is with you as a doctor—that is, partly —but I am not the patient. I almost wish I were," he added, in a troubled tone that awakened the other's interest, notwithstanding the natural preoccupation of his thoughts.

"Let me hear," returned Dr. Cameron.

"You make my task easy," the stranger remarked. "And yet," he went on in a curter and more business-like tone, "you may be less willing to listen when I tell you that I have first a story to relate which, while not uninteresting in itself, is so out of accord with your present mood that I doubt if you will be able to sit through it with patience. Yet it is necessary for me to relate it, and necessary for you to hear it, now, here, and without any interruption."

This was alarming; especially as the speaker did not seem like a man given to sentimentalities or even to exaggeration. On the contrary, he gave the impression of a person accustomed to weigh his words with studious care, not allowing a sentence to escape him without a decided motive.

"Will you tell me your name?" requested Dr. Cameron.

The reply came quietly.

"I doubt if you will know it, and I had rather you had not asked it. But since it is important above all things that you should trust me, I will say that it is Gryce, Ebenezar Gryce, and add that I am a member of the police-force; in short, a detective."

Dr. Cameron felt his apprehensions vanish. Whatever the other's errand, it could not be one that touched him or his; and this to a man on his wedding-day was certainly a comforting thought.

"You undervalue your fame," he replied. "I know your name well. Can it be possible you desire my assistance in a professional way?"

The detective's gaze, which had been resting gloomily upon a laughing cherub on the mantelpice, shifted, but he did not respond to the doctor's smile, and his manner remained unaltered.

"I will tell my story," said he. "It will be the quickest way to come to an understanding."

And without further pause or preliminary, he began in the following words:—

CHAPTER II.

THE DILEMMA.

"I AM getting to be an old man, and I have my infirmities. But there are still cases which are given to nobody but me. Among them are those which involve the honour of persons in a high station of life."

Mr. Gryce paused. Dr. Cameron felt his apprehensions return.

"You see," the detective slowly resumed, "I can keep a secret; that is, when the life and property of others are not endangered by my silence. I can do a detective's work and keep a detective's counsel, only speaking when and where necessity requires."

He paused again. Dr. Cameron moved uneasily.

"As in this case," added the other, gravely.

"This case?" repeated the doctor, now thoroughly alarmed, "What case? You excite me; tell me what you have to say at once!"

But the detective was not to be hurried.

"I was therefore not at all surprised," he proceeded, as if no interruption had occurred, "when some three days ago I was requested to call upon—Mrs. A., let us say, on business of a strictly confidential character. Such summonses come frequently. Such a summons does not disturb an officer in the least. I nevertheless made haste to show myself at Mrs. A.'s house; for Mrs. A., whom you perhaps know, is a woman of some consequence, and her husband a man of widespread reputation and influence. I found her at home, anxiously awaiting my appearance. As soon as she saw me she told me her trouble: 'Mr. Gryce,' said she, 'I am in a great dilemma. Something has occurred in our family which may or may not lead to a lasting dishonour. What I wish from you is aid to determine whether our fears are well-grounded. If they are not, you will forget that you were ever called to this house.' I bowed; I was already interested, for I saw

that her anxiety was great: while I could not help being puzzled over its cause, for she had no son to disgrace her by his dissipations, and as for her husband he was above reproach. She soon relieved my curiosity.

"'Mr. Gryce,' said she, 'I have a daughter.'

"'Yes,' I returned, inwardly startled, Miss A. and dishonour seemed so wide apart.

"'She is our only child,' the mother went on. 'We love her, and have always cherished her, but though it is not generally known in the house—' and here the poor lady's eyes roamed about her as if she were afraid that her words would be overheard, 'she has left us; gone away without acquainting us where—suddenly, inexplicably, leaving only the most meagre explanation behind her, and—and——'

"'But, madam,' I interrupted, 'if she left *any* explanation——'

"Mrs. A. took a small and crumpled note out of her pocket and handed it to me.

"'A letter,' she affirmed, 'sent through the mail. And I was in the house when she left, and would have listened to any reasonable request she had to make.'

"I had already read the four or five lines which the letter contained.

"'Dear Mother,—

'I must have rest. I have gone away for a few days, but shall be back on the twenty-seventh. Don't worry.

Your affectionate ——.'

"'What is the matter with this?' I asked. 'She says she will be back on the twenty-seventh, and to-day is only the twenty-fourth.'

"'Sir,' was the answer, 'it is the only time in our experience when our daughter has left us without first gaining our permission. Besides, the time is especially inopportune. My daughter's wedding-cards are out.'"

Mr. Gryce stopped suddenly, for Dr. Cameron had given an anxious start.

"Ah, that arouses your interest!" remarked the detective. "Your own wedding being so near, I am not surprised."

It was dryly said, and the doctor at once reseated himself.

He had no wish to appear unduly moved, but he could not suppress every token of emotion, so he turned his head away from the light. Mr. Gryce let his gaze travel to a new object before proceeding.

"This avowal of Mrs. A. put a new aspect on affairs," said he, "but yet I saw no reason for the extreme anxiety displayed. 'And on what day does she expect to be married?' I asked.

"'On the twenty-seventh.'

"'But she says she will be back?'

"'That does not comfort me.'

"'You think she will not come?'

"'I have no hope that she will.'

"This acknowledgment was uttered with emphasis. There seemed to be but one conclusion to draw.

"'Your daughter wishes to escape her engagement?'

"The answer was less emphatic than before. In fact it expressed doubt.

"'I do not know, sir, my daughter is not herself; has not been for some time. My husband and myself have both noticed it; but we never anticipated her taking any such extreme action as this. Where has she gone? What will become of her? How can we face the world? How can we tell her lover?'

"'Then you think——'

"'That she is labouring under a temporary aberration of mind, caused perhaps by the excitement of the last few weeks; that she is not responsible for her acts; that she may be anywhere, remote or near; and that we may wait till the hour set for her marriage is past without seeing her.'

"To this I could make but one reply. 'Then why not take her lover into your confidence, inform him of your fears, and gain the benefit of his experience in your search for her?'

"The answer will astonish you.

"'Because we are very proud and he is very proud. To explain our fears, we should be obliged to say much that it would be humiliating for us to utter and for him to hear. Besdies, we may overrate the situation. She may come back as she says she will; and should this be the case, you can see for yourself what endless regret would follow any such confidences as you suggest.'

"'But——' I began.

"'It is this note that causes our dilemma,' she interposed. 'With these lines before me I cannot act as if there were no hope of her returning in proper time to take her part in the ceremony. Yet I do not trust these lines, nor the promise she has made. Why, I can hardly say; for she has always been a woman of her word. But she is not herself, of that I am convinced.'

"This repetition of her former assertion made it easy for me to inquire what special change she had perceived in her daughter to lead to such a conclusion. She evidently found it difficult to reply.

"'I cannot put it into words,' she declared; 'I feel the change.'

"'And how long have you felt it?'

"'Not long; since we began active preparations for her wedding, I think.'

"'And has no one else observed it?'

"'I cannot say; I should think her lover would.'

"'Why?'

"'Because it has been in reference to him she has shown her peculiarities strongest. For weeks she has received him only on sufferance; and for the last few days has more than once absolutely refused to see him.'

"'And what reason did she assign for this?'

"'Follies. Fatigue, caprice, a letter to write, a dressmaker to see, anything that came into her head.'

"'Yet she went on preparing for her wedding?'

"'Certainly, her cards were out.'

"The tone in which this was said caused me to reflect. Though affable, kindly, and even philanthropic in her dealings towards the world at large, Mrs. A. is, as every one knows, a woman who would find it very difficult to infringe upon any of the laws of society. Having seen her daughter pledge herself to a man of suitable pretensions, she would consider such a pledge final if only because she could not face the talk and scandal that would follow a rupture. Influenced by this idea I remarked:

"'You must be perfectly frank with me if you want me to help you at this crisis. Has your daughter, or has she not, expressed a wish to break her engagement?'

" 'She asked me once if I thought it too late for her to do so. Of course there was but one reply to this, and she said no more. But,' the poor mother continued hastily, 'that was only a symptom of flightiness. She has nothing against her lover—does not pretend to have.'

" 'Only against marriage?'

" 'Only against marriage.'

" 'Mrs. A.,' I now boldly asked, 'do you think she loves the man you expect her to marry?'

" The answer came hesitatingly. 'She accepted his attentions with pleasure when they were first offered.'

" 'Do you think she loves any other man?'

" The mother shrunk back in dismay. 'I am sure she does *not*. How could she? There is not another such gentleman in our circle of acquaintances.'

" This was flattering to the gentleman, but not exactly satisfactory to me.

" 'You know girls sometimes take strange whims,' I remarked.

" 'My daughter is not a girl, sir, she is a woman.'

" This silenced me as it would you, sir, I have no doubt; and seeing the mother was really sincere in believing that her daughter's mind was temporarily affected, I inquired again as to what she had done or failed to do of late, and found that she had shunned the society of the members of her family as well as that of her lover, finding her sole interest seemingly in the preparation of her wardrobe. 'To that she did attend,' said Mrs. A., 'and it was the only thing she did help me in. No hour was too late for her to see her dressmaker; no engagement too pressing for her to receive and fit on any of the new costumes that kept coming home. Indeed, she showed more than a bride's usual interest in such matters; and it is the one reason I have for not disputing you utterly when you say she may come back. She will want to see her dresses.'

" 'Then she did not take them with her?'

" 'She took nothing.'

" 'What! not a trunk?'

" 'Nothing; that is, nothing but a little hand satchel.'

" 'How do you know this?'

" 'We all saw her go out; she was in shopping costume.'

" 'But she had money?'

" 'I cannot say. Some, no doubt; but we found a large roll of bills in her drawer, and her father says it contains nearly all he had lately given her. I do not think her pocket-book held more than five dollars.'

"This was a point. Either the girl was going amongst friends, or she was really touched in her mind. To make sure that the first supposition was not true, I asked for a list of the houses which Miss A. was in the habit of visiting. Mrs. A. mentioned some half-dozen, but added that her daughter's most intimate companion was in Europe, and that she did not think she cared enough for the others to go to them at this time.

" 'And she positively carried no baggage with her?'

" 'None. I have looked her things over carefully and find nothing missing. She did not even wear her diamonds.'

" 'And her watch?'

" 'Is left behind.'

" I felt troubled. I looked at the mother to ascertain what her real fears were. But they did not seem to be any worse than those she had expressed. Was she blind to the possibilities? I felt it my duty to repeat a former question.

" 'Mrs. A.,' said I, 'I will try and find your child. The fact that she had too little money to go far from home will facilitate matters. But first I must be sure that there is no third party mixed up in this case, and that party a gentleman. You are certain she was not secretly interested in some unknown person?'

" 'I can only repeat her words,' replied the poor mother. 'The very last time I saw her (it was the day before yesterday evening) she looked so feverish and acted so unlike herself, that I ventured to ask her if she was sure she would not fall sick before her wedding-day. She said with an unnatural laugh I hear ringing yet, "I have no idea of falling ill, and I shall certainly not do so till after I have married the doctor."'

" Did I say," inquired the detective, pausing, "that Miss A——'s lover was a doctor?"

This was too much for his uneasy auditor. Leaping to his feet, Dr. Cameron confronted the speaker and exclaimed, hotly,—

" You are playing with me! It is of my intended wife you

are speaking, and you are amusing yourself with a long drawn-out tale, when all I want to know is, whether I am to find my bride at the altar when I go there, or whether I am to be made the victim of an outrageous scandal that will affect my whole future career? Don't you know that it is now half-past four, and that at eight——"

"Softly," interrupted the other. "I am Ebenezar Gryce, and I seldom go slow when I ought to go fast. If I take up your time by telling you a long drawn-out tale, it is because——"

But the doctor was in no mood for talk.

"Tell me," said he, "if Miss Gretorex has returned to her father's house?"

"She has not."

"And they have not heard from her?"

The detective shook his head.

Dr. Cameron's mouth took a grim curve.

"There is to be no wedding, then, I see." Then, as the other did not answer, he broke out into a harsh laugh and turned towards the window. "I will send and countermand the order for my carriage," he now dryly remarked.

Mr. Gryce advanced and touched him softly on the shoulder.

"On the contrary," said he, "you will send for it to come at once; there is use for it."

"I do not understand you."

"You have not heard my story out."

"Speak, then. If nothing but slow torture will answer, why I must summon up my courage and submit."

"Good! Meanwhile you will send for your carriage?"

"If you say I will require it."

"I have already said so."

"Wait," cried the other, stopping him as he reached out his hand toward the electric bell. "Where am I expected to go?"

"To the C—— Hotel."

"A fine ride on my wedding-day."

"A necessary one."

"And whom am I expected to see there?"

"A young woman who has registered herself as Mildred Farley, but who I think looks precisely like the original of that picture I see hanging over your fireplace."

Dr. Cameron shuddered.

"Don't you know whether it is the original or not?"

"No; if I did I should not need you. I should take Mrs. Gretorex with me instead."

"And why don't you do so as it is?"

"For two reasons. First, she is a woman, and I wish to save her all the suffering I can; secondly, she is a marked person, and her appearance in a crowded hotel on the day of her daughter's anticipated wedding might awaken comment."

"And mine?"

"You are a doctor; you can go everywhere, at any time, without causing the least scandal."

"And the young lady? Have you thought how very agreeable to her my presence will probably be, if she is, as you surmise, the woman I was expected to marry in four hours?"

"I have thought of everything. The young lady shall not see you. You shall only see her."

"And if I find her the stranger her name implies?"

"You shall drive to Mr. Gretorex's house as fast as you can, confident that your bride will be there to welcome you."

Dr. Cameron no longer hesitated. The carriage was ordered. While they were waiting for it, the doctor asked for the remainder of the story he had before disdained to hear. "I can listen now," he said, "I already know the worst."

With an enigmatical bend of the brows, the detective continued,—

"Mrs. Gretorex has an unlimited confidence in the police. When she had told me that her daughter was missing, that she had gone out of the house without baggage, and showed me the letter she had received, she evidently thought she had given me all the information necessary. But I thought differently. Having but three days in which to accomplish this task, it was necessary that no time should be lost in pursuing false clues, so, after asking for Miss A.'s—Miss Gretorex's photograph, I put a few further questions, and finding that she could really give me no added information, I followed out my usual course in these matters and asked leave to interrogate the servants.

"'But,' she exclaimed, 'they have no notion but that she has gone away with our full knowledge and consent. It would

ruin everything to take them into our confidence; girls of that class can never keep a secret.'

"'I understand,' I replied, 'and I have no notion of taking them into our confidence. We have fifty ways of getting what we wish out of servants without their suspecting either us or our motives.'

"I thought the lady looked peculiar. 'Well,' said she, 'the only one who could give you any information has lately left the house. My daughter took a dislike to her and begged that she should be dismissed. Not liking to cross Miss Gretorex in her present condition, I complied, though I knew nothing against the girl and liked her work well.'

"This had the look of a clue; at all events it was worth another question.

"'And what excuse did your daughter give for her dislike?'

"'Oh, none; thought the girl prying, I believe—meddled too much with her new things, I suppose.'

"I asked for the girl's address. That word *prying* gave me hope; it was the *open sesame*, perhaps, to the mystery before us. The mother gave it without hesitation, but also without any enthusiasm. That a servant should have picked up any information in regard to her proud daughter of which she herself was ignorant, seemed absolutely incredible to her. But I know my business," asserted Mr. Gryce, "and after taking such measures as are usual with the police when a person like Miss Gretorex is missing, I went to see this girl.

"I will not try your patience by relating the interview. It was like a thousand others I have had, and ended very much as I expected it would. She talked, but was not conscious she talked. She told me all she knew about Miss Gretorex, and considerable that she did not. There was evidently reason for her mistress calling her prying, for she had a great deal to say about a girl who used to come there with sewing; trash which I was obliged to listen to in order to get at the one thing I wanted, which was that she had once surprised the young lady writing a letter she evidently did not wish seen, for she blushed with anger at the intrusion, calling the girl names and threatening her with the dismissal she afterwards received."

"And this letter?" asked Dr. Cameron, in a voice he strove in vain to keep calm.

"Was but begun. The girl only saw the line 'My beloved D——,' a very proper beginning if she were writing to her future husband."

"Very," returned the doctor. But the suppressed sarcasm in his voice told the detective all he wanted to know.

"But it looked as if it were not to her future husband," continued that worthy, gravely. "And finding that she had no intimate friend whose name began with D——, I began to feel assured that my original surmise was true, and that there was a third party in the case to whose influence Miss Gretorex's disappearance was due. I therefore added to the precautions already taken such others as my own judgment suggested; causing a description of her person and clothing to be sent to many quarters usually omitted by the authorities. Besides doing this I had her various haunts well searched and her friends examined. A detective was even sent to this office, sir, and conversed with you a half-hour day before yesterday without your suspecting his errand. But all was of no avail till this morning. This morning word was brought me that a person answering the description I had sent out, had taken dinner at a certain restaurant and afterwards gone to the C—— Hotel, where she was to be found in room 153. In half an hour I was there, and in five minutes more I had seen her."

"And was—was she——" stammered the doctor.

"I have said she was like the original of that picture," remarked Mr. Gryce. "But I cannot swear she is Miss Gretorex. Her face is that of the missing heiress; but her clothing, while it answers in a general way to the description of what Miss Gretorex wore on leaving home, still shows points of difference which an old hand like myself cannot but take note of. As, for instance, the description reads: '*A dress of fine blue cloth trimmed with rows of black braid,*' while this woman's dress is of blue cloth indeed, but not fine and not trimmed with black braid. Besides she has a watch on, and Miss Gretorex, as we know, left hers behind her. Yet," he went on, as if in answer to Dr. Cameron's sudden look of relief—though how he could see it I cannot say, for he was looking in quite a contrary direction—"clothes are alterable and faces not so much so. Though I do not profess to explain the dis-

crepancies I have mentioned, I fully believe the woman in room 153 of the C—— Hotel is the lady we seek; but that we may be sure of it, I have come for you."

"But," cried the doctor with a frown, "if there is a third party, as you say——"

"Hark!" said Mr. Gryce, "the carriage." And he rose in a way that admitted of no dispute.

CHAPTER III.

ROOM 153.

THE ride was comparatively a silent one. Mr. Gryce, never much of a talker, except when he had an object in view, found sufficient occupation for himself in looking out of the window, while Dr. Cameron was in too perturbed a condition of mind to risk speech even if the confused nature of his thoughts had allowed it. He was suffering from the first real blow his pride had ever received; for he knew now that it was his pride that had been hurt and not his heart—his pride which was so great that at the very thought of humiliation his whole future became clouded. He a betrayed lover! He an outraged bridegroom! It was an intolerable thought, and yet he could not escape from it. For now that he had turned his back upon that part of the city which had held his hopes, and was *en route* with a detective to an obscure hotel down town, he knew as well as if he had already recognized her that he was going to see there Genevieve Gretorex. The utter sinking at his heart assured him of it. The thousand and one memories of his acquaintance with the cold and haughty woman who had accepted his attentions, but who had never loved him or seemed to ask his love, added their weight to his conviction. He could perceive now that her thoughts and interest had been elsewhere. He laughed to himself with an immeasurable bitterness as he remembered how he characterized by such terms as noble self-control, dignified reserve and lady-like *hauteur*, the chill, studied manner he now saw to

be the expression of indifference if not actual distaste. And he had come to his very wedding-day without suspecting the truth; had bought his presents and fitted up his house for a bride that had actually left her home and resorted to the most miserable of subterfuges to escape him. It was enough to crush all gentleness out of him; to make of a once generous and amiable man, a cynic and a misanthrope. His working features showed his feelings; his clenched hand, his determination. If it was as he feared, and Miss Gretorex should be found by him in hiding, instead of in her father's house dressing for a ceremony to which a thousand guests had been invited, he would flee the city, leave the country, and with it the derision of his enemies, and the no less unacceptable sympathy of his friends. In his imagination, he was already half across the ocean, when the carriage came to a standstill. Looking up, he saw they were before the hotel, and the character of his thoughts changed.

"What time is it?" he asked, abruptly.

"Just five minutes to six."

"Late! if fate should be so unexpectedly propitious as to prove your surmises wrong, and I should wish to get back to St. Nicholas Place by eight."

"No," said the detective. "It has taken us just eighty minutes to come down, and it will take us just eighty minutes to go back. That will give us ten minutes for what you want to do here and leave you a full half-hour in which to change your coat and don a white neck-tie; all that I see you need to do before taking your part in the anticipated ceremony."

"You calculate without delays."

"I see no cause for any."

"You cannot always prevent them. I should not wish to be late if the bride is not," he somewhat sarcastically suggested.

The detective did not seem to fear any such result.

As they were alighting from the carriage the physician's thoughts seemed to take still another turn. He glanced at his companion, and though he did not meet his eye—something which very few could boast of ever doing—he seemed satisfied with his scrutiny, for he remarked,—

"You have meant to show me a kindness, Mr. Gryce."

The detective did not contradict him.

At the entrance of the hotel, Dr. Cameron again addressed him.

"You have promised she shall not see me?"

"I will keep my word."

"Give as little cause for scandal as you can," he said.

Mr. Gryce shrugged his shoulders.

"Trust me," was his laconic rejoinder.

They went upstairs, quietly passed down a hall or two and stopped in a dark passage.

"Wait," enjoined the detective; and he stepped up to a girl that was loitering in the vicinity.

A few words settled his business and she came rapidly forward, stepped by the doctor and opened a door near by with a key she took from her pocket.

"Room 153 happens to be a very convenient one for our purpose," whispered Mr. Gryce, as the girl passed in and left them a minute alone. "It has its main door and it has this other and but little used one, opening into an alcove with curtains. The girl is gone to see if the lady wishes anything. She will leave the door ajar when she comes out."

Dr. Cameron flushed scarlet and drew hastily back.

"It is a sneaking piece of business," he objected.

"But it must be done," quoth the other; then, as the girl came out, added, "if she is the patient you seek, her parents will be only too grateful to you for your attention."

Dr. Cameron frowned, subdued his natural feelings and followed in the wake of the detective, who had already stepped across the threshold.

The room, or rather the alcove thus entered, was dim, and for a moment he saw nothing but the bed that together with a wardrobe took up most of the space before him. But in another instant he had observed the thin streak of light made by the separation of the two heavy curtains that hung between him and the apartment beyond, and walking quickly up to it, he looked through.

A pathetic sight greeted him. Kneeling before a fire, whose leaping flames seemed neither to lend warmth to her icy cheek nor comfort to her miserable heart, he saw a woman, whose listless eyes, fixed upon a paper that was consuming on the hearth, saw nothing beyond one figure, seemingly, in this world or the world to come. But, apparent as was her misery,

the doctor saw in that first glance but two things, her face and her form. Both were unmistakable. They were those of Genevieve Gretorex.

His look as he fell back revealed the truth. The detective, who was close at his side, took his arm without a word and turned towards the door. But Dr. Cameron, moved perhaps by some vague memory of the despair he had seen, turned round again to the curtain and allowed himself one other glance. His face softened as he looked, and he involuntarily raised his hand to the curtain as if moved by some uncontrollable impulse to enter, when he felt his companion's firm clasp close around his arm, and yielding to that kindly but inexorable will, he wheeled about and followed Mr. Gryce out of the room.

"So there is no mistake?" inquired the detective.

The doctor shook his head.

Mr. Gryce softly closed and locked the door out of which they had come. Giving the key to the girl, who was not far off, he remarked, "It is not the person we seek," and quietly led the way towards the stairs. But here Dr. Cameron stopped him.

"What are you going to do?" asked he.

"Ride to St. Nicholas Place as fast as I can."

"And what do you expect me to do?"

The detective opened out his hands French fashion. "I have no further control over your movements," he observed.

Dr. Cameron still held him back.

"Mr. Gryce," said he, "have you seen this young lady yourself?"

"Certainly; before I went for you to identify her."

"You noticed how pale she was, then, how unhappy?"

"I did not think so."

"She is the living picture of despair."

Mr. Gryce's hand, that was sliding up and down the stair-rail, suddenly stopped.

"Your emotions make you exaggerate," he declared. "It is scarcely three hours since I saw her, and she struck me then as looking not only well but full of bloom and hopefulness."

"Go and look for yourself," suggested the doctor. "If I

am any reader of countenances it is a wretched woman we leave in yonder."

Mr. Gryce paused no longer. Gliding swiftly back, he procured the key once more, took a glance for himself and came out troubled.

"I don't understand it," his look seemed to say to the unconscious key as he handed it back for the second time to the obliging chambermaid.

The girl may have surprised that look, at all events she ventured upon a word or two that seemed to move the detective strangely. He gave the key another glance, asked a question or two and then hurried away to the office by another stair than that which was guarded by Dr. Cameron's tall figure. He was gone five minutes and the doctor was beginning to lose control over his patience when the detective appeared below, and hastily beckoned to him. Dr. Cameron at once ran down. There was a change in the detective's manner which he could not but notice.

"It is as I said," remarked he.

Mr. Gryce laughed—he did sometimes—and hastened towards the street door. "We have no time to lose," he affirmed.

"*You* have not, perhaps," exclaimed his companion, energetically. "But my duty is here; Miss Gretorex looked as if she needed a friend, and if it is true that her mind is affected——"

"Hark!" cried the other, in his shortest, sharpest accents. "Five minutes ago I might perhaps have agreed with you, but since then I have heard something which changes my mind. Sir," he asserted, "since I saw the lady three hours ago, she has had a visitor, a gentleman. She received him in her room; they talked a full hour, and when he went out, he stepped up to the girl we saw upstairs, and—summon up your courage, sir, if you love her—said that he was coming back again at nine o'clock; that he should bring a clergyman with him; that, in short, he expected to marry the lady this very evening in the room in which he had just left her, and wished it put in readiness for the purpose. He told the same story to the clerk downstairs, and——"

"His name? what was the villain's name, or didn't he leave any name? Quick! let me know my whole disgrace at once."

"He left a card, and the name on it is one you may know." And the detective handed over to his companion a visiting card on which was inscribed:

Dr. Julius Molesworth.

"Molesworth!" repeated the other, in a tone of incredulous amazement. "Impossible! Some one has made use of his card."

"You think so?"

"I know so. She could never have become entangled with him. He is a graduate of the Medical School, and is all right in a professional way; but he is on the Health Board, and confines his practice to charity patients in the —— Ward. She could never have even met him."

"It is not always safe to say whom a woman may or may not meet."

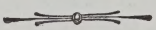
"She would never have been attracted to him if she had. Molesworth is one of the most eccentric of men." And Dr. Cameron drew up his fine figure in a way that was sufficiently significant.

Mr. Gryce smiled and shook his head.

"Let us make ourselves sure of the matter," said he. And leading the way back to the office, he asked a description of the owner of the card.

"A peculiar-looking person," answered the clerk. "Medium-sized, but with a face that means business. His hair is dark, and he wears no beard. He has a pleasant smile, but his frown makes you feel as if you wanted to stand from under. His clothes——"

But Dr. Cameron had already drawn the detective to the door. "Let us get away from here," he cried.



CHAPTER IV.

MRS. GRETOREX.

THEY were in the street. Dr. Cameron, whom this last blow had seemingly dazed, stood on the hotel steps looking in a vague way about him, like one made suddenly homeless; while the detective, with his hand on his arm, endeavoured to make him understand the necessity of haste.

"Haste? Why should I hasten?" asked he at last, struck by the word. "I have no engagements, they will scarcely miss the bridegroom if the bride is absent."

"Possibly not; but that absence must be accounted for. That is my duty, perhaps; but you have one, too, I think, sir."

"Here? possibly."

"No, I don't think you can do anything here. But you might try. The lady is alone, and——"

"I cannot," interrupted the other, with a look of irrepressible repugnance. "Neither my love nor my complaisance is sufficient for such a humiliation." And he started away towards the carriage.

Mr. Gryce followed him, saw him enter, and stepped into the vehicle himself.

"To the nearest elevated station," he shouted to the driver. "And quick! We have lost ten minutes by this unexpected discovery," he explained, in apologetic tones to the doctor, "and must make them up at our own inconvenience."

The doctor did not reply; apathy had succeeded disgust.

Mr. Gryce went on talking.

"I am in no position to suggest your duty to you, sir; but I will just lay before you one or two conclusions that have come to me in the last five minutes. Will you listen?"

"I have nothing else to do," dryly remarked the physician.

"Very well, then. Some time ago Miss Gretorex engaged

herself to you. She seemed happy; then some trouble came into her life, we do not know what, but we can safely connect it with this Molesworth, and she wished to break her engagement. But her mother, to whom she mentioned her desire, thought it too late for her to do so; and, driven by some unknown necessity of the situation, she quitted her home three days before her contemplated marriage, leaving behind her, you must remember, a distinct promise to return in time to fulfil her part in the contract. The wedding-day arrives and she delays her return unaccountably; but the wedding-day is not over, and when I saw her here at two o'clock there were yet six hours before her. Did she intend at that time to keep her word? We do not know; but her face was cheerful, even expectant; the face indeed of a woman who is looking forward to immediate marriage with a man worthy of her, and whom she not only loves but respects. But a visitor comes. She has a long talk with him, and the result is a distinct change in her bearing and expression, which seems to argue a distinct change in her plans. We still hear that she is going to be married, but the name of her bridegroom is a new one, and the place of her bridal the very room which at present is only a witness of her despair. What is the conclusion? There may be many, but the one that has suggested itself to me is this: That in her secret heart Miss Gretorex loves the man she has seemingly fled from, and that in this new and unexpected union she is making a sacrifice to some fancied duty. If this is so——"

"She is lost to me as much as if she gloried in her duplicity," broke in the doctor, coldly.

The detective slowly shook his head. "You do not love her," his gesture seemed to say.

But his words betrayed no such conviction.

"She is courting a wretched fate," he declared. "A marriage perpetrated in this manner and under circumstances so near to scandalous, will not only destroy her in her own esteem, but sever all connection with her kindred and the friends who have hitherto made up her world. She is lost if it is allowed to take place. Her mother must stop it, since you do not feel yourself equal to the task. And to the mother we hasten."

Dr. Cameron's look of gloom did not lighten.

"You are right," he assented. "Let Mrs. Gretorex be told of her daughter's position as soon as possible. But why need I go with you?"

"To save your good name intact. You are expected to be on hand to marry Miss Gretorex at eight o'clock. If she is *too ill* to marry you, society will confine itself to commiserating your disappointment. But if you are not there——"

He stopped, for the doctor's whole manner had changed.

"Shall we not go by the elevated road?" asked Mr. Gryce, in his quiet way.

"Certainly, certainly," came from the doctor, in ringing tones strangely in contrast to his late apathy; "anything to get there in time. Who knows but my honour may at least be saved?" And the voice which gave the orders to the coachman now was his, and it was his foot that first touched the pavement, and his form that led the way up the stairs to the elevated road.

They were fortunate in catching a train immediately, and once upon it, both breathed easier. Twenty-five minutes certainly would suffice to carry them to One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street, fifteen minutes more take them across town, and fifteen minutes additional see them at the house. Fifty-five minutes, and they had an hour and forty minutes. That is, an hour and forty minutes before eight o'clock. But Mrs. Gretorex had to be informed of her daughter's critical position and get down to the hotel by nine. Could it be done? The calm face of the detective asserted his confidence that it could.

But there are accidents that upset all our calculations. Just as they were congratulating themselves upon the good time they were making, the cars gave a sudden jerk and came to a standstill. Instantly all the ladies in the car rose, and next moment the gentlemen, for they had just left a station and were yet some distance from another.

"A break-down!" exclaimed the doctor.

"In the middle of the block!" added his companion.

Yet they did not believe their own words, and it was some minutes before they fully realized that the engine had really given out, and that they were virtually prisoners, and liable to stay where they were for half an hour at least. When they did, and had calculated the possibilities of escape and found none

(for like all such accidents it had taken place in the highest portion of the road), they turned from each other with an irrepressible expression of dismay. For even if they succeeded in reaching the house by eight o'clock, the half-hour now lost being made the expectation of getting Mrs. Gretorex down to the hotel in time to stay her daughter's marriage, no longer within the possibilities. *Her* fate was then decided, and by a power higher than their own. The thought affected the doctor deeply, for he knew, or thought he knew, enough of Dr. Molesworth, to foresee anything but happiness for her in an alliance with him. Even if he were a man of her world, which he was not, he had characteristics of disposition that would try the meekest woman; and *she* was a decidedly haughty one, with memories behind her that would make a life of constant concession intolerable.

In the blank of the dull window out of which he looked, he perceived her image tied, with all her accomplishments and lady-like proclivities, to this brusque, stern, self-contained man, whose ambition was as hard as his poverty, and whose will was allied to something narrow and constrained, rather than to what was broad and helpful. The result was pity. Not the pity that is akin to love, for love he could not have now or ever again for this woman. The shock she had given his pride had killed its very germs in his heart. Even if he could bring himself to believe in the detective's plausible explanation of her conduct, and find in her very inconsistencies the evidence of a hidden and baffled affection for himself, his feeling must still remain one of pity alone. The fact that he saw her face as never before; that its least line struck him with a sense of beauty that had sometimes been lacking in his contemplation of her, did not go far to dispel this conviction. Misfortune, while separating them, had emphasized her figure in his eyes, and though she was his no more, he could not but marvel over the fate that had come between him and one whom he now saw could easily have been his ideal of what was personally fascinating and attractive. The Genevieve he had seen at his last interview—not the one he had seen to-day—*was* beautiful; and pitiable as it was to consider, had shown signs of that feeling attributed to her by his companion. He flushed as he remembered it and rigorously turned away his thoughts. But they had taken deep root,

and though he rose from his seat and walked the length of the train, talked to the engineer and interested himself in one or two passengers whose countenances betrayed apprehension, he could not escape them, nor substitute with any other vision the picture of her face as it had appeared to him on that one night. He saw it in the clouded skies as he glanced out, in the blaze of the fire as he peered into the furnace; finally in the abstracted visage of his companion, as he returned to his old seat and sat down again by the detective's side. Do what he would,—and his pride impelled him to make every effort possible,—the shy, almost beseeching glance so new to those proud eyes, the bright alluring smile, even the turn of her form as she looked back on leaving him, would recur to his memory with a photographic distinctness that effectually blotted out the wild dishevelled woman of whom he had had that hateful and stolen glimpse through the curtains. Had it not been for the hurried beating of his heart, the fierce, almost unbearable irritation of his nerves worn to exasperation by these lingering moments of enforced waiting, he could almost have imagined that the events and revelations of the day had been a dream, and that he was going forward with warmth in his heart and hope in his soul to a marriage that promised love and honour. As it was, no clinging and persistent vision of her or any other woman could blot out the shameful fact that he was on his way to anything but a happy bridal scene; that instead of honour he should meet mortification, and in place of love, defeat and possible regret.

Mr. Gryce—who, in the wisdom of his old age, never chafed at what was unavoidable—had nothing to say during this time of inaction. Possibly he had taken the opportunity to study out some other case, possibly he thought silence more discreet than speech; at all events, he made no effort to break it, and the minutes went by, and the seemingly interminable half-hour came to an end without a word having been uttered between them. But with the first onward movement of the car both roused and Mr. Gryce spoke.

"Thirty-five minutes lost! That's bad! but if the fates are propitious we may succeed in our intentions yet. Come to the door and don't stop for any courtesies. Seconds are of importance now."

And seconds were made use of. Old as Mr. Gryce was,

he showed that when hurry was demanded not even his proverbial rheumatism stood in the way. As soon as the cars stopped at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, they were out of them, and sighting a train approaching them on the cable road, ran, caught it and were on their way across town before some of their fellow-passengers had reached the bottom of the elevated stairs.

There was no delay this time; St. Nicholas Avenue was reached at a quarter to eight, and as they had but a few minutes' walk before them, they stepped out with a decision that was almost hopeful. Suddenly a carriage rolled by them.

"Good God!" exclaimed Dr. Cameron, "a guest going to the wedding!"

Another carriage, and another; the street seemed alive with them.

"Why didn't I think of this?" muttered the doctor, feeling the cold sweat breaking out over him.

"Did you expect anything else?" asked the detective. "The parents, hoping for her return up to the last, naturally could take no measures to warn their guests. You will even see an awning up, you may be sure."

"'Tis horrible!" came from his companion, with bitter emphasis; and at the corner of St. Nicholas Place he almost stopped, as if he felt himself unable to proceed. But the detective's firm figure passing hurriedly on, he recovered from his momentary weakness, and followed him.

Meanwhile the stream of carriages kept up, and presently they could hear the slamming of doors as their occupants alighted. Something in the sound, in the general aspect of things, seemed to move the doctor strangely.

"Hark!" cried he, clutching at the detective's arm to stop him. "There is no confusion, no delay; the guests go in and are received. And look! lights—lights from basement to garret! What does it mean? Do those wretched parents still hope that she will come?"

For answer, Mr. Gryce drew him hurriedly on.

"Don't stop for anything!" he cried. "Forget your wrongs, your fears, your hopes even. Be a machine; we have work to do." Then, with a sudden change of tone, "You must not be seen by these people, and you must see the

hostess, and immediately. How are we going to do it? Is there a basement door?"

"Yes, but the side-door is better. If we are met it will cause less remark. I am expected at the side-door."

"Good! to the side-door, then." And, dashing through a crowd of small urchins that blocked the road, they made their way around the house to the entrance mentioned, catching glimpses through the windows, as they did so, of blazing chandeliers and towering plants, and hearing with feelings that may well be imagined, the bewildering tones of an orchestra mingling with the hum of many voices.

They opened the door. A festive scene burst upon them, but they paid it little heed. The tall figure of the family butler bowing before them absorbed all their attention, for he wore a look of expectancy and cheerful welcome that added to the mystery of the moment, and made it difficult for the doctor to stammer out,—

"Where is Mrs. Gretorex? I must see her at once."

The butler, surprised, stared at the doctor an instant, and, seeing something in his face that he did not understand, faltered helplessly, and turned his eyes upon the detective.

"Mrs. Gretorex," repeated Dr. Cameron. "I want to see her. Tell her——"

"Wait!" whispered Mr. Gryce, "I had better send her my name," and he took a card out of his pocket.

But the butler, more and more surprised, shook his head, and, while he did not refuse to take the card, muttered,—

"Pardon, Monsieur!—Madam Gretorex make her toilet; but if Dr. Cameron will go to his room, I will tell her——"

"That will do," broke in the detective. "Take us upstairs at once," and, ignoring with his usual imperturbability the glances of astonished inquiry that followed his rather burly figure clad in its common business coat, he pushed his way to the stairway, without waiting to see if the doctor was behind him.

This gave the butler an opportunity to whisper, "The bride is a little late, Monsieur; and Mrs. Gretorex asked me to say——"

"I cannot wait!" broke in the doctor, exasperated that they should still attempt to keep him in ignorance of the real state of affairs. "I will go up, and you see that Mrs. Gretorex

comes to me immediately," and he followed in the wake of the detective, conscious from the expression of the faces he passed that he wore anything but the aspect appropriate to his supposed position of bridegroom.

Mr. Gryce was waiting in the hall above.

"I have inquired for the room set apart for your use," whispered he, and they point out the one at the end of the hall. Isn't it a sham?" he added. "And what pluck on the part of the mother! I declare I had no idea she would carry it as far as this; but I suppose she could not help herself. She kept hoping and hoping from minute to minute that her daughter would come, and has not yet found courage nor opportunity, perhaps, to explain the situation and dismiss her guests. If it were not for what we have still to do" he added, as they stepped into the room which had been pointed out to them, "I would wait and hear what excuses she would frame to meet the emergency; for you may be sure they would be entirely in accordance with the demands of the occasion."

"There is no excuse possible. The truth will have to be told," declared the doctor.

But Mr. Gryce shook his head, and, pointing to the clock, replied,—

"There is yet an hour before us. If she will come at once, and go with us at once, Mr. Gretorex may safely be left to announce to the throng that his daughter has been suddenly taken so violently ill, that her marriage to-night is impossible. Not one in a dozen will believe him, but the talk that will follow will not hurt you; and to-morrow any turn can be given to the story which the facts will bear out."

"Yes, yes," began the doctor, but he went no further, for at that moment there was a rustle heard on the threshold, and Mrs. Gretorex, magnificent in velvet and diamonds, slowly pushed open the door, and stood in a dignified attitude before them.

Both gentlemen started forward, and both gentlemen paused confused, for her air was one of courteous protest, and the glance she allowed to travel from one to the other had nothing but a haughty inquiry in it, which, to them, knowing as they did all that was hid behind it, showed a power of dissimulation that for the moment was almost disconcerting. Nor were her first words calculated to better the impression she had made.

"You have sent for me?" said she, with a glance at the

doctor which completely ignored the detective. "May I ask what I can do for you?" Then, as the doctor hesitated in his agitation, added politely, "It is eight o'clock, and my daughter is almost ready. I hope these few minutes of delay have not inconvenienced you?"

"Your daughter!" gasped Dr. Cameron. "She is here?" while Mr. Gryce, in nowise disturbed by the coldness with which his presence had been received, took up a silver paper-weight from a table near by, and began to weigh it in his hand, while his lips moved with what might be called the ghost of a whistle.

"My daughter is here, of course, sir!" declared the mother in tones that were almost icy in their pride and indignation. "Where else should she be on her wedding-night?" and she cast a furious glance at the detective, which that person was of course much too absorbed to meet.

"Here!" again repeated the physician, absolutely dumb-founded at her audacity. "I beg pardon, but I thought——"

Her smooth smile stopped him.

"Shall I inform my child that her bridegroom is ready?" she asked, with a polite but doubtful glance at the overcoat he still wore.

Dr. Cameron stared, felt himself inadequate to grapple with the situation and glanced at Mr. Gryce, who softly laid his paper-weight down and advanced.

"Madam," said the latter, "excuse me, but moments are of inestimable value just now and I must go straight to facts. Your daughter——"

But this woman was not one to brook interference. "I don't know you, sir," she affirmed, and turned again to the doctor. "When my daughter's toilet is quite complete you will receive a summons from her maid. Would you like any assistance yourself?"

This roused Dr. Cameron. Advancing, he took the lady's hand and respectfully bowed over it. "Mrs. Gretorex," said he, "you ignore the man you have employed, but you will not ignore me. If your daughter is in this house she must have returned here in the last few minutes. In that case——"

But here he was again interrupted.

"You mistake. My daughter—concerning whose movements you seem to have formed the most unaccountable con-

clusions—has been in this house since noon. She came back with a cousin of hers from Montclair, just as we were beginning to feel anxious about her. Her present delay is owing to an entirely different source. Some trouble about her veil, I believe."

For the second time the doctor showed intense astonishment. "Mrs. Gretorex, do you speak the truth?" he asked; "Miss Gretorex here and since noon, when I myself saw her at the C——— Hotel an hour ago? You are deceiving me, and I as your intended son-in-law will not endure it. Though I pity your daughter from the bottom of my heart, I cannot marry her, for her conduct has shown a duplicity to which this tardy return to fulfil her engagement only gives an emphasis."

It was now Mrs. Gretorex's turn to look dumbfounded. She gazed at the doctor as if to see whether he were in his proper senses; then she stepped up to the detective.

"This is your work," she cried. "You have gone beyond your orders. Did you not receive my telegram?"

"No, madam."

"I sent you one as soon as my daughter came back. Her explanations were entirely satisfactory, and there is no reason why any of us should think of the matter again. Yet you have talked in the very quarter where I desired you to be silent, and the consequence is, that my daughter's happiness is threatened and her character impeached. It is an irreparable injury which I shall never forgive." And, leaving Mr. Gryce to digest these pleasing words, she turned again to Dr. Cameron.

"Sir," said she, "I do not know what excuse you can have for asserting that you have seen my daughter within an hour. I only know that the fact is impossible, for Genevieve has not been out of the house since her return at the time I mentioned, as a dozen witnesses at least can prove to you. As to the duplicity of which you complain, it amounts simply to this, that she felt her health giving way under the constant strain of our numerous preparations, and in a sudden freak, which she now deplores as sincerely as myself, started off for Montclair without telling any one of her intention, thinking that the complete rest thus obtained would benefit her, as it has; for never has she looked more

blooming or more fitted to be your wife than at this very moment when you hesitate to accept her."

For answer, the doctor walked up to the detective.

"Could we have been mistaken?" he asked. "Was it indeed another woman?"

"I will tell you in two minutes," was the hasty answer; and quitting them with small ceremony, Mr. Gryce passed out of the room.

The doctor made no effort to apologize or answer Mrs. Gretorex till he came back. His whole future destiny was trembling in the balance, and it was as much as he could do to retain his composure. Happily the time of waiting was short. Mr. Gryce rejoined them almost immediately, and bowing low to the lady of the house, said in Dr. Cameron's ear, "Another case of mistaken identity. Mrs. Gretorex is correct in all her assertions. You have made a fool of me and I show my chagrin by simply departing."

The doctor attempted no reply. He was beside himself with joy. What, the whole dreadful business of the last four hours a farce? His marriage assured, his bride untainted, no Molesworth in her past, no possible jealousy in their future? He almost dropped on his knees to Mrs. Gretorex, in his contrition; attempted explanations and paused, thinking them too inadequate; laughed, asked questions about his bride's beauty and betrayed impatience to see her; in short, acted like any man suddenly transported from unhappiness to rapture.

The mother, understanding him better than he thought, perhaps, only smiled, and pointing to his black necktie, asked if he had a white one in his pocket.

His face grew suddenly long, and he flushed with intense mortification.

"I have not come quite prepared for so grand a ceremony," he stammered. "If the guests will wait a little longer while I send for my coat and tie——"

"They must," declared Mrs. Gretorex, calling a servant at once and giving him one or two orders. "It will not take more than another half-hour, and the band can keep them patient till then."

"Tell them I was detained by an accident on the elevated road. As I was," he merrily added. "Keep them in good-nature and give me a glimpse of my bride."

"You impatient lover!" was all the relieved mother could say; but her look was a promise, and in a few minutes a trim and quiet girl came tripping to the door, and, smiling coquettishly, showed him a room at the other end of the hall, saying:

"Miss Gretorex is all dressed, sir, and will speak to you for a minute if you desire it."

He did not linger an instant. Something,—was it love, or only that old pride of his restored to its full life, burned in his breast, and made his short walk down the hall a remembrance of delight to him? Her door just ajar, was like a beacon of hope, and when he saw it open wider and caught the one short glimpse she allowed him of her tall and elegant figure in its shimmering robes and misty veil, he felt his pulses beat as never before, and scarcely needed the charming smile she gave him to complete a happiness which at that moment was supreme.

"I have kept you waiting," she murmured; and he found no answer for looking at her eyes, that, seen thus through her veil, possessed a beauty and a glow which made her absolutely beautiful. "I am all ready now," she cried, "but mamma says that you are not. Naughty man, to go careering down town to look after some patient or other when you should have been thinking only of me."

He laughed, feeling himself to be another being, and she another being from the man and woman of a week ago. Then he looked at her again, and uttered some tender compliment which made her blush deliciously, and then in answer to a wave of her hand, that seemed to say, "Enough!" was about to withdraw, when he saw her eyes suddenly dilate and a look of fear cross her face that he involuntarily turned and glanced down the hall behind him for its cause. There was nothing there, absolutely nothing; only the figure of a hairdresser, or some such woman, who, in cloak and veil, stood with her little bag on her arm waiting to enter; and astonished at the ease with which his mind lent itself to the most startling conjectures, he turned back to reassure himself by another look at his bride, when the door, which had been swung open between them, softly closed, and he found himself shut out from her presence, with a new memory and a new fear to make discord of the notes of the wedding march he was soon to hear.

CHAPTER V.

A STARTLING INTERRUPTION.

THE Gretorex mansion was eminently adapted for a large gathering. Built since the introduction of the modern styles, it had intricacies and surprises innumerable; but it had also many and various rooms of spacious proportions opening into hallways so wide and upon staircases so ample, that had the number of guests reached the full thousand that had been invited, there would have been sufficient accommodation for all. So numerous indeed were the rooms on the first floor, and so admirably were they disposed, it had not been found necessary to ask the guests to ascend the stairs at all. Thus it was that Dr. Cameron had met friends on the landings but none on the floor above, and thus it was that upon his return to the room which had been allotted to him, he could pace its length for twenty minutes without an interruption. And a friend's face, a jovial word would have been so welcome! For he did not want to think, and was impatient at the solitude which forced him to do so. When the die has been cast, when our future is decided upon, we wish to reach the culmination without delay, and Dr. Cameron, wearied by many and varied emotions, only longed for the moment when amid music and bustle, the flash of lights and the murmur of voices, he should lead his young bride into the presence that would irrevocably seal their fate. For in these long and heavy minutes of waiting he had something besides his thoughts to contend with; he had impressions, a consciousness almost amounting to an intuition, that something strange, something dark, something entirely out of harmony with this scene of light and joy, was taking place near him :—in his sight if he could but see, in his hearing if he could but hear; at all events near him, awesomely near, as near as that closed door towards which he cast hurried and shrinking glances every time a turn in his walk brought him within view of it.

That he had no reason, or at the most the slightest reason,

for this sensation, did not make it any less vivid or powerful. Right or wrong it had got a strong hold upon him and swayed him so completely that if the door I have spoken of had opened at one of the moments his eye was upon it and revealed a grizzly skeleton standing on its threshold, he would not have felt the shock as much as he did the ringing bursts of melody that now and then soared up from the violins below. Yet in his heart he knew that he was but the fool of his imagination, and that nothing more serious than the re-arranging of a lock of hair or the buttoning on of a refractory pair of gloves by the commonplace hand of the woman he had seen enter there could be going on in this room his fancy peopled with shapes of fear and despair.

For he was a man of common sense and knew the fashionable world well, and was moreover quite aware as a physician how far a man's imagination can carry him when his nerves have been unstrung by a series of such potent sensations as had visited him in the last four hours. Let that door once open and the bride set forth and all would be hope and cheer again. He knew it even while he was shuddering over the conviction that it had opened, and that a hand had been thrust out in a gesture of silent appeal and as quickly again withdrawn.

The coming of the servant with the articles necessary to complete his toilet was like cold water dashed upon a man heated with fever. It righted him immediately. As he tied his necktie and fastened his gloves he felt himself to be no more a dreamer of nightmares, but Dr. Cameron, known throughout all the city for his practical common sense and sound judgment. He even laughed in his old, easy fashion as he peered down the hall and saw the servant who had waited upon him walk up and knock with the utmost assurance on the door he had been so long and fearfully watching. Nor did he feel himself to have been any the less a fool when in a moment later he beheld it open and caught a glimpse of his bride's white veil and sweeping train as she gave her answer to the man, and then waited with the door half shut for the summons to descend. As he had promised himself it would be, all was cheer and hope again; nor in the bustle of preparation that presently followed did he become conscious of a thought out of harmony with the scene till, suddenly, as

he was half way down the stairs, he felt his bride lean a little heavily on his arm, and, turning to look at her, perceived, not a woman, not an automaton even, but a spectre, whose glassy eyes, fixed upon vacancy, froze the blood in his veins.

What did it mean? Was she mad, or was she—— He did not stop to finish his thought; he clutched her by the arm and gently but firmly spoke her name. A shiver seemed to go through her, then she turned her head and slowly, painfully, under his gaze her lips took on the semblance of a smile so forced, so meaningless, that he stopped her where she was, and, pointing to the surging sea of faces below, exclaimed:

"They are waiting for us; the minister has his book open, and your parents are already standing on each side of him; but if you do not wish to marry me, if there is any impediment in the way, or if you feel I cannot be to you the husband you desire, say so and we will turn back. No moment is too late before the minister has uttered the final words."

But her eyes, which had opened fearfully as he began to speak, closed softly as he finished, and murmuring coldly, "Let us proceed," she stepped down another stair.

He followed her and spoke again.

"I cannot go on, Genevieve," he persisted, "till you assure me of one thing. Is your heart mine? Stands there no other man between us whose memory makes this moment frightful to you? If there is——"

"There is not," came from her lips, now showing less pallid under this questioning. "I am ill, fearfully ill; that is all."

He looked at her. He had known sickness which had changed a person's whole aspect in less time than had passed since he saw her blooming and brilliant a half hour before. And such might have attacked her, he could not tell.

"Are you too ill to go on?" he asked.

"No."

"You can bear the effort and excitement?"

"I can bear anything."

His foot moved towards the edge of the step on which he stood.

"Genevieve?"

He had stopped again.

"Yes," she murmured, wearily.

"Do you love me?"

Her form, which up to that moment had held itself erect by the mere force of a will exerted to the utmost, suddenly yielded and expressed in every curve a feminine softness.

"With all my heart," she murmured.

"Then," said he, "I am content." And his foot passed over the edge of the step.

There was no further delay. In a moment they were at the foot of the stairs, and in another had entered the parlour under the gaze of five hundred pair of eyes. As they did so a murmur expressive of something more than admiration arose behind them, and Dr. Cameron, tortured by anxiety, cast another look at his bride. She was pale and her eyes were surrounded by great circles, but it was a woman who moved beside him, and a determined woman too, and the change brought comfort to his heart and made the rest of his walk down the room less of an ordeal than their entrance had been.

The clergyman was an old man and had doubtless married a thousand couples. To him there was nothing strange in a pallid and weary-looking bride, and a nervous, deeply-excited bridegroom. He gave them a benevolent glance, lifted his book and began the service. But there were some persons present, relatives and friends of the contracting parties, who felt there was something unusual in the affair and craned their necks to get a glimpse of the bride's face, wholly forgetful of the splendour of her jewels, and the priceless lace of her veil, which under other circumstances would have attracted all their attention. The bride, however, did not lift her eyes, and when she spoke in answer to the minister's questions, the reply she gave was uttered in a voice so low that no one heard it but the bridegroom and the minister. But this is not unusual with brides, and the ceremony proceeded, and the time came for placing the ring on her finger.

But here a difficulty arose. For some reason best known to herself, Miss Gretorex had preferred to be married without bridesmaids. There was therefore no one at hand to assist her in taking off her glove, and her own agitation making her unequal to the task, she found herself obliged, after an ineffectual effort or so, to stretch out her hand for the ring, with the glove still on it. Dr. Cameron, feeling for her

embarrassment, accepted the situation with his usual *sang froid*, and holding the ring on the first joint—for it would not slip all the way down on a finger so protected—was on the point of uttering the sacred vow, to love, cherish and protect her, when, through the hush of the moment, there came an interruption so startling and so wild that every head turned, and more than one rosy cheek grew pale. It was a scream, an unearthly and terrified scream! Coming from where? No one could tell. Speaking of what? Fear, dismay, anguish, anything, everything that was out of accord with the scene it had so weirdly interrupted.

Dr. Cameron, thinking of the banshee's warning, stretched out his arm to sustain his bride, whom this last and most fearful shock must surely rob of all strength. But he soon found that she needed no assistance. Instead of succumbing to the general fright, she seemed to rise above it, and, contrary to every expectation of those about her, her head rose and her lip grew firm till she grew absolutely masterful in her earnestness and determination. The minister caught her look, the bridegroom the infection of her spirit, and the ceremony proceeded almost without the break of even a momentary hesitation. With the utterance of the benediction, a great sigh of relief rose from the vast assemblage, and upon the bride and groom turning to receive their congratulations, no one marvelled to observe her cheek so pale, or his brow so troubled, for the echo of that unexplained shriek was still ringing in all ears; and to superstitious minds, if to no others, there was an omen in this weird interruption that was anything but reassuring.

Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex alone preserved their usual imperturbability. With smiling faces they greeted their child, and shook hands with their new son-in-law. Then as the wonder and dismay about them took speech, and such phrases as "What do you think it was? Did you ever hear anything like it?" began to be whispered about, Mr. Gretorex stepped forward and remarked,—

"We have a servant who is subject to fits of nervous excitement. It was her voice you heard." And immediately the countenances of all brightened, and the line of friends and acquaintances began to form, and congratulations were offered, and the scene regained its lost cheerfulness and brilliancy.

Only in two hearts the shadow yet rested, and upon two

brows apprehension had set its seal too deeply for a word to drive it away. Dr. Cameron and his bride did not believe in the explanation which had been offered, and to one of them at least the future held terror which made the present ordeal of smiles, bows, and mechanical hand-shaking a torture which was only made endurable by the fear of re-arousing suspicion in the breasts of the guests. And even this thought lost its sustaining power at last, and Dr. Cameron, who was constantly on the watch for signs of weakening on the part of his bride, turned and drew up a chair for her, saying,—

"You are overtaxing your strength. Take it easier, my darling."

A smile, extraordinarily sweet, answered this his first attempt at conjugal tenderness, but it soon flitted away, leaving her paler and more hollow-eyed than before.

"I cannot stand this long," she murmured. "I must know what that scream meant. Do you think I could be excused from receiving any more congratulations? I want to go to my room." She paused with an irrepressible shudder; then continued, "I must go to my room if only for a moment. I cannot breathe here."

"There is your mother," he rejoined, surprised and yet touched by her aspect of appeal. "She understands all these matters; let her manage it for you."

And anxious to save his newly-made wife all the effort he could, he leaned forward, and touching Mrs. Gretorex on the arm, whispered,—

"Genevieve is really feeling quite ill. Is there no way of releasing her from all this nonsense? She wants to go to her room."

The haughty mother surveyed her daughter in surprise.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "You were well enough this afternoon."

"I know," responded her daughter with an effort; "but that scream——"

"Pshaw! havn't you heard Margaret cry out before? You are foolish to mind it; everything is all right now."

"I know," was the low reply, "but—" and here the young bride made an effort visible to all—"I cannot be myself till I know that it *was* Margaret who screamed. Send and see for me."

The mother's lip curled, but she did not refuse her daughter's request. Beckoning a servant to her, she whispered him an order and turned again to her guests. Mrs. Cameron endeavoured to do the same, but her smile had become ghastly, and she committed more than one *gaucherie.* At length, the servant not returning, she gave up all attempt to sustain her part, and sat literally shivering, her eye on the door by which the servant had disappeared, as if upon his reappearance alone her life and reason depended.

Dr. Cameron, who lost nothing of all this, even while endeavouring to cover up her abstraction by renewed attention to the guests crowding around them, was about to suggest the advisability of her following out her first impulse and going to her room, when suddenly her whole bearing changed, and she rose with a hurried apology and hastened towards the door. Her husband followed, but her action was so quick and the throng so great that she escaped him for the moment, and he did not see her again till she appeared on the stairs going rapidly up.

She was moving eagerly and showed no signs of weakness, so he did not hasten, there being more than one of his particular friends in the way, ready with jest or congratulation to detain him. Some few minutes therefore had elapsed before he reached her door. It was closed, and he knocked, expecting it to be opened immediately. But though he repeated his knock no answer came from within, and irritated beyond measure by this succession of incomprehensible occurrences, he shook the handle of the door and spoke her name with decision.

It had the desired effect, for in a moment the key was turned in the lock, and the door opened just wide enough to show her face. He was startled to perceive that the room behind her was perfectly dark.

"I will be out in a moment," she declared, and smiled a hurried dismissal.

But he was not going to face the crowd below again, so he did not turn at her bidding, but kept his place, which seeing, she stepped out into the hall and said,—

"I am feeling better. If you will give me ten minutes more rest and quiet, I think I shall be able to go downstairs again."

Why did not Dr. Cameron feel relieved at this, especially as she was looking better? He could not tell.

"Are you sure," he inquired, "that you are best alone? Shall I not stay with you and take you down?"

But her look trembled with an appeal so urgent, she seemed so anxious for solitude and repose, that he had not the heart to urge his new claims upon her. He therefore withdrew after a comforting word or two, determined to step into the room which he had occupied before the ceremony and there await her coming. But before he could reach its threshold he was stopped by the servant who had been sent by Mrs. Gretorex to make inquiries about Margaret.

"Oh, sir," inquired this man, "is Mrs. Cameron in her room? I want to tell her about Margaret."

"And what have you to tell?" asked the doctor.

"Nothing, sir, except that Margaret isn't in the house at all. She went out after she got her supper without asking leave of any one, sir. I suppose she thought no one would miss her. But Mrs. Fenton, the housekeeper, sir, sees everything, and——

"Then she was not here when that scream was heard?" interrupted Dr. Cameron.

"No, sir; and Peter says—he was on the stairs, sir, at the time—that the scream came from our young lady's room. But I think he was mistaken, for there was no one there to scream——"

"Wasn't there a hairdresser or some such woman?" queried the other.

The servant shook his head.

"But I saw some such woman go in before we went downstairs," persisted the doctor.

"Very likely, but she must have come out again; for Miss Gretorex—I ask your pardon, sir, Mrs. Cameron—locked the door after her, as she wouldn't have done if she had left anybody in the room. I was in the hall, sir, and saw her, as perhaps you did too, for you were standing where you are now, sir, if you remember."

Dr. Cameron did remember, though the incident made no impression on him at the time; and, puzzled more than he wished to appear, he waved the man aside and made another attempt to enter his room. But he was stopped again, and

this time by his wife's voice. He turned quickly; she was advancing towards him with a light step, her veil off, her gloves torn from her hands.

"Pardon me," she entreated, "but I have changed my mind. I do not see any reason why we should go downstairs again before all those people. I am not well, and they know it, and you hear yourself what a good time they are having without us. Let us go away at once. I do so long to be out of the house—and—and—you will please me so if you say yes."

She had laid her ungloved hand upon his arm, but she quickly withdrew it. Her eyes, however, continued raised to his with a look of which he felt the eagerness and also the inscrutability. He did not know what to say.

"We are going to Washington, are we not?" she now half interrogated, half asserted.

He replied that this had been his intention.

"Then we shall have to start soon, for it is a long ride to Jersey City."

"I had expected——" he began, but he did not continue. Why waste words when she was only asking him to do what his own better judgment told him was best.

"You will go?" she persisted.

"As soon as you can get ready."

Her look of relief was unmistakable. She smiled and a tint of colour came into her cheek.

"You are good," she declared, warmly. Then as a loud swell of music rose from below, she glanced nervously at her dress and drew back. "I have to put on my travelling suit," she remarked. "When that is done we will call mother. Wait for me in your room." And with a nod she glided from him, her long train sweeping behind her, with reckless haste.

He watched her for a moment, his brows bent but his heart in a glow. He did not understand her, but at this crisis he did not know that he wished to. The fascination of her look might depart when her trouble did, and he was not yet ready to see it go, even though he grieved to have her ill, and felt a pang of real pain at the sight of her hollow eyes, whose glance he had lately found so brilliant.

He was, therefore, looking in her direction when she re-

entered her room, and still looking when in less than a minute she came out again, and peering carefully on all sides, slipped up to a door near by, opened it, and discovering nothing to disturb her, passed hurriedly in. She carried her suit, hat, and a small travelling-satchel on her arm. It made him think of his own clothes and of another fact that was slightly embarrassing. This was that his trunk was at his own house, and his money also. Neither had he any carriage at his disposal, having dismissed his own, as we remember, at the elevated station down town. He would, therefore, have to request Mrs. Gretorex to order up her horses, which was certainly an awkward piece of business, and he would have to carry his bride to his own house before he could start with her for Washington.

But these were small matters after the serious anxieties he had already experienced; and determining to make light of the whole affair, he sent word to Mrs. Gretorex that circumstances compelled him to take his bride away at an earlier hour than he had contemplated, and asked if he might be accommodated with the use of her carriage, as his own was not at his command.

This brought the lady to his room as he had expected, and a short passage at arms occurred between them, which ended in his wishes being respected and the carriage ordered. But Mrs. Gretorex was greatly disappointed, and did not hesitate to say so. It was consequently a relief to Dr. Cameron to have their interview interrupted, as it shortly was, by the appearance of his wife, fully dressed and ready for departure.

"Oh!" she murmured, as she saw them together, and set down the satchel she carried in some confusion. But she speedily recovered her self-possession, and advancing lightly, observed with careless ease,—

"Sorry to leave you so soon, mother. It would be pleasant to stay, of course; but I had an awful shock when that scream was heard, and Dr. Cameron thinks as I do, that we had better go while I have the strength to do so. You will pardon us, won't you, especially as you will see us so soon again?"

Mrs. Gretorex did not answer; she was examining her daughter's dress.

"Well, I never saw you look so well in olive before," she

observed at last, as the daughter turned almost petulantly aside. "And how that new dressmaker does fit you. Your figure looks as well again as it did in Madam Dubois' dresses. Any one would have declared you had gained five pounds, if they did not stop to see that it was the skill of the modiste that had rounded you out so gracefully. I will never interfere in such matters again, my love."

The young bride flushed, as if this obtrusion of feminine trivialities into a departure of this nature was especially distasteful to her. But she said nothing, and lifted up her face to be kissed, in the cold and somewhat ceremonious way Dr. Cameron had himself been accustomed to. "Good-bye, mamma," she murmured. "Say the same to papa for me. I—oh, where is Peter? I have a trunk to go down."

"Peter is coming now. Good-bye, Dr. Cameron. Bring my daughter back as happy as she was four hours ago, and I shall have nothing more to ask of you." And Mrs. Gretorex stepped aside as if to make room for them to pass out.

But though Dr. Cameron, animated by her gesture, led the way to the door, his bride showed no disposition to follow him.

"I will wait till Peter has taken my trunk," she declared.

And though he endeavoured to urge her to descend while the hall was comparatively empty, she refused to do so, and not only lingered till Peter appeared, but persisted in going with him herself into her room, where she showed him her trunk, strapped and ready by the door, and watched him till he had carried it safely out.

"I don't see where the maids are," murmured Mrs. Gretorex.

But her daughter, not minding the implied criticism, advanced with forced gaiety, and taking Dr. Cameron's arm, announced that she was now ready to depart.

"I will just close and lock your door," said Mrs. Gretorex.

But her daughter, saying there would be plenty of time for doing this after her departure, led her mother towards the stairs, and smilingly waited till she had seen her long damask train disappear across the first landing. Then she looked up at Dr. Cameron and they ran rapidly down.

"We will slip out as quietly as we can," she whispered. But the company had already got wind of their departure and there were many good-byes to be answered, and much merriment, to which Genevieve lent herself with a good grace, though her husband could see that her eye scarcely left her mother's tall figure, and that the grasp of her hand on his arm tightened if ever that mother made the least movement as if about to withdraw.

Finally the last hand-shake was given, the last jest uttered, and they found themselves at the carriage door.

"Now," cried he, "we shall soon be on our way." And he held the door open for her to enter.

But she was not yet ready. "I have something to say to Peter, first," she declared. And slipping up to the old servant, who was just about to re-enter the house, she thanked him and gave him what seemed a final gift.

The man bowed and went hurriedly in. She cast one look behind her, sighed, or so her husband thought, then turned quickly and stepped into the carriage. The doctor followed, the door was shut with a bang, and the carriage rolled away As it did so, the young husband felt the pressure of his wife's head on his shoulder, and looking down into her face perceived that she had fainted.

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER BRIDE.

Mr. Gryce had observed that he was getting old. He never felt older than he did that night when, after the discovery of the mistake he had made, he turned humiliated from the presence of Mrs. Gretorex and the man whom he had caused to suffer such a succession of serious and wholly unnecessary emotions.

He was unused to making mistakes. He had always been so wary, so exact, so sure of his premises, that he could look back upon few cases where his conclusions had been really at

fault, and on none before where the outcome of his efforts left him in what some of his young and possibly envious rivals might call a ridiculous position.

"It is a new sensation," he muttered, as he passed down the elegant staircase on his way out. "Well, a new sensation is something. I have heard some men say they would give a good deal to experience one. But as for me, give me the old ones; they are certainly more satisfactory." And with a bitter smile he prepared to thread his way through the brilliant throng that circulated between the staircase and the side-door by which he had entered, and by which he was expecting to go out.

But before he had worked his way half through he paused, stepped aside and took up his station against the wall in a position that gave him a good view of the scene, without attracting too much attention to himself. "Since I am at a swell wedding I might as well see the bride," he continued to himself, turning his gaze, however, in any other direction than that by which she was expected to descend. "If she looks more like her photograph than the other girl does, well and good, I am an old fool, and it is about time for me to take down my sign and shut up shop. But if, on the contrary, she looks less like it; if her expression varies or she is fairer or larger than one would suppose from the picture they gave me, then I can lay the fault on the photographer and regain some portion at least of my self-esteem." And unmindful of the curious glances which now and then found him out, he retained his place through the weary minutes of waiting that now ensued, amusing himself as usual in gathering together such odds and ends of talk as floated by him and stowing them away in the store-house of his brain, which already held so many secrets even of some of those who passed him by in gay apparel without a thought that the grave, quiet, rather benignant, looking man, who was so occupied with the device on Mr. Gretorex's great hall clock, was he who held in his keeping their fortunes and possibly their good name.

At length, with a sigh of relief, that ran through the length of those vast parlours, the strains of the "Wedding March" were heard, and Mr. Gryce, whose interest in the aforementioned device now became absolutely absorbing, shifted his portly figure a step or so, while the throng at his side

pressed back and a path was made for Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex, and then, after what seemed a long and unnecessary interval, for the bride and groom, who, contrary to the usual arrangement, descended together. They passed near, very near, that great hall clock, so near that the bride's veil brushed the homely habiliments of the man who stood there; but she did not notice this, nor to all appearance did he, for his eyes never left the clock, though a careful observer might have perceived that his lips pressed a little closer together after she went by, and that he did not wait for her to pass over the threshold of the parlour door before taking his departure.

But no one thought of him. All eyes were on the bride, and little did any one think, least of all she whom it most concerned, that the faint, half-suppressed click which they had just heard, denoted the withdrawal of one whose powers of observation were more to be dreaded than were those of the whole vast crowd he had left behind him. If she had—— But our interest is not at present with the bride, pale and troubled as she is, but with this man, who but a short time ago entered the house with feelings of almost beneficent concern for its inmates, only to leave it now with a sore and humiliated heart.

For in the one glimpse he caught of the bride—and he saw her though he did not appear to do so—he had discerned nothing to relieve his dissatisfaction with himself. If the other girl was like the picture, this pale, haughty, self-contained woman was the picture itself. There was no mistaking this, much as his pride would have been gratified to have found it otherwise. Details that were lacking in the other girl's countenance were here, and an expression which made him acknowledge to himself that he would henceforth trust no man's eyes, not even his own, in this delicate matter of identification, the least shade of a look making sometimes all the difference between one person and another. He went out of the house feeling, as I have said, very old, and he even was conscious of a twinge or two of rheumatism as he stepped down the icy steps and prepared to take his way round the house to the street. For this reason perhaps, and also because the walk was more or less slippery, he went very slowly, so that he was just at the corner of the house when that startling scream was heard, which, as we know, so seriously

disturbed the minds of those who were witnessing the ceremony. A muffled cry it was, and to those outside sounded as if it came from the upper story of the house. But when the detective paused and looked up at the windows overhead he saw nothing, and being in a very indifferent mood, went on his way, remembering the occurrence only as a sort of lugubrious echo to the rather melancholy thoughts in which he had been at that moment indulging.

His course was towards the city. He took it direct, getting on the elevated train at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street and getting off again at Twenty-third. Why Twenty-third? Was it not late enough for him to go home? He evidently did not think so. Without hesitation, and with a certain determination of manner, he went immediately to the C—— Hotel.

Let us follow him.

"Well, I suppose the wedding has come off?"

These were his words to the clerk who was still at his desk in the office.

The clerk looked at him and laughed.

"No," was his quick rejoinder, "it didn't. The bride absconded."

"What is that?"

Mr. Gryce's tone was quite sharp. His face resumed its old expression.

"She ran off; didn't wait for the clergyman; afraid to risk herself with such a glum-looking customer as Molesworth, I suppose. I can't say I blame her."

"Humph! You interest me. And at what hour was this—how soon after we left?"

"In a few minutes I should say; for you had not been gone more than half an hour when the expectant bridegroom came with the Reverend Mr. Pease at his heels, and she was not here then, nor had been for some little time."

"Who saw her go out?"

"The hall boy."

"No one else?"

"I think not."

"Didn't she leave any word behind her?"

"Yes, a note; it was lying on the table in her room. Molesworth got it."

"The door, then, was open?"

"It was unlocked."

"Curious. There seems to be some difficulty in the way of wedlock to-night. I have just come from a wedding, and the bride was three-quarters or more of an hour late. But Molesworth, as you call him—how did he take it?"

"That's hard telling; he looked grim enough, but then he was none too cheerful-looking before. Anything but a bridegroom in appearance at any time. But then, it was rather hard lines for him. 'Twould make any man angry, Mr. Pease on hand and no bride! I declare I felt cheap myself; and the chambermaid, I believe, shed tears, grieving over the loss of the good fee she expected, I suppose."

"Yes, it's quite thrilling, quite romantic," quoth Mr. Gryce, enthusiastically. Then in quieter tones remarked, "You were all in the room, then?"

"No, I didn't know anything about it till Dr. Molesworth came down, and, giving me the price of the room, remarked that there would be no wedding at present, the young lady having preferred to wait till she could have her friends about her."

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Gryce.

"Neat, wasn't it?" remarked the clerk. "But he is no fool; and though I knew on the spot that she had run away for good, I couldn't help giving him credit for coolness. But it was all in his words, his look was terrible."

Mr. Gryce's eyes fixed themselves on the small lamp used to light cigars.

"I can imagine it," said he.

"But he wasn't tragic, not a bit of it," continued the clerk. "Not even when he took out the note he had evidently received from the girl, and burned it in the flame of that jet."

"Oh! he burned it, did he?"

"Down to the very end."

"And then went away?"

"Directly."

"Well, this has been a delightful evening!" commented Mr. Gryce; and he lounged away a few more minutes in the office, then went out, and, entering a drug-store near by, searched for an address in the directory.

"I cannot sleep, why then not amuse myself," his look seemed to say, as glancing up at the clock he passed again into the street, and betook himself westward.

Certainly one does not run across such a complication every day, and when one is a detective, why not enjoy now and then the advantages of his position.

Mr. Gryce went up the steps of a four-story brick building to which was attached a doctor's sign.

A middle-aged woman, of neat enough appearance, answered his ring, after a short delay.

"Is the doctor in?" he asked.

She shook her head, and glancing at a slate that hung on one of the pegs of the old-fashioned hall-rack, declared,—

"He won't be home before to-morrow."

"And I am so ill," murmured the detective, with an air of great weakness. He had read her character at a glance.

"You?" she exclaimed.

"And I have come so far," he went on. "I thought surely I should see him to-night, if I came late enough. I know he is going to be married soon, but——"

"Married!" The interruption was full of surprise and incredulity. "Married! Dr. Molesworth! I guess you are mistaken."

"Oh no," the old gentleman persisted, assuming with every instant a look of greater distress.

"I had it from one who knows him intimately. He is going to be married; but sensible girls don't keep their lovers out too late, and I thought I might find him in; I wish I had, for when I have these turns nothing but opium will help me, and the drug-clerks won't give it to me without a doctor's prescription. I must go on."

But the old lady's sympathy as well as curiosity had been aroused. She was a widow and a boarding-house keeper, but she had a heart, and was not afraid of showing it.

She therefore stopped him as he hobbled towards the door, and showing him the way into the parlour, asked him to sit down by the fire and warm himself a moment before going out.

"I am sitting up," she explained, "because there are still four or five of my young men out, and as I do not give night-keys to any one but the doctor, I have to sit up, or ask

some of my hard-working girls to do so. It is dreary waiting sometimes, but on the whole they are considerate, and I don't complain."

Then as she saw or thought she saw the old gentleman's face grow brighter in the really genial glow of the good hard-coal fire before them, she asked in a hospitable tone if he had ever heard whom the doctor was going to marry.

He shook his grey hairs indifferently, picked out with his glance a coal in the fireplace, and began to study it intently.

"I never paid it any attention," said he. "I am getting too old to busy myself much about such matters; and girls are all the same to me, unless it be one girl," he added, with a half-senile, half-pathetic smile, taking from his pocket as he did so a photograph which he looked at fondly.

"Your daughter?" inquired the old lady.

"My grand-daughter," he replied, with enthusiasm.

She leaned over as women will at the sight of any picture in the hand of another, and quietly looked at it.

"Good heavens," she exclaimed, "it is Mildred Farley!"

"Mildred Farley," he repeated, in mild surprise, "I never heard that name. This is Joanna Handscombe."

"Let me see it," cried she, and Mr. Gryce, greatly pleased at the success of his trick, handed her the picture of Genevieve Gretorex, satisfied that if this good woman continued to find it like the Mildred Farley she had mentioned, he should find that Mildred Farley was the name of the young woman he had himself first taken for the original of this picture, and in whose fate, despite his reason and his years, he had found himself so much interested, that he had come here at this late hour of the night to learn her name, and if possible her dwelling-place.

His success surpassed his hopes. The old lady looked at the picture, shook her head, and looked again.

"How these photographs can deceive!" cried she. "If I had not stopped to look at this twice, I would have sworn it was Mildred Farley's face, but I see now that she wears her hair quite different, and that she is older and much better dressed than Mildred could ever hope to be. Nevertheless, there is a very striking similarity, and I should like to see—Miss—Miss——"

"Handscombe," put in the detective.

"And Mildred together. It would be a pleasing study." And she stared long and earnestly at the picture, winding up with: "I should like to show it to Mildred."

This was putting herself exactly in the position desired by Mr. Gryce.

"You can do so," he observed, "if you do not have to carry it far nor keep it long. Does Mildred live anywhere near you? Can you see her to-night?"

"She lives in my fourth story front room, sir. Mildred Farley is one of my boarders."

Mr. Gryce stroked his trembling right knee with a very loving hand. "One of your boarders," he repeated. "She is doubtless then upstairs asleep."

"No, poor girl, no. She is a dressmaker, and sometimes does not close her eyes till one o'clock at night. She is not asleep; but, come to think of it, she is not in the house at all. She went away for a short vacation a few days ago, and though she promised to be home this afternoon, I believe she did not come. It has always been my hope that Dr. Molesworth would marry *her*. She is a lovely girl, and he is a very fine man. Why, then, shouldn't they come together?"

"And what makes you think they will not? Why shouldn't it be she he is going to marry?"

"Why? Because they would have told me. He knows and she knows there is nothing I wish so much. It would be preposterous for them to keep it to themselves after all I have said. No, if Dr. Molesworth is going to marry any one (and I don't believe yet he is), it must be some ridiculous chit of a girl he has met away from here; and Mildred—why, Lena!"

This exclamation was caused by the appearance at the door of a young girl, who the moment she saw Mr. Gryce, shrank back and started to run away.

But that emphatic *Lena!* stopped her, and in a moment the old lady was in the hall; a whispered conference ensued, followed by the re-entrance of the good woman with a note in her hand.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, looking first at the letter she held and then at the feeble figure of the old man who had risen with well-feigned indifference as if to go. A note from Dr. Molesworth which he left on purpose for me! and

that girl forgot to give it to me till now! What can he have to say?" And breaking the seal, she read the few enclosed lines with a growing wonder that ended in the joyous exclamation of "Good gracious, it is Mildred, after all! He is going to marry her to-night, and bring her home to-morrow. Well, I will give up. Never a word to me about it, and I so fond of them both! I don't understand it, folks are *so* queer." And she fluttered to and fro in ill-disguised joy, talking and muttering to herself, while Mr. Gryce pulled his muffler about him and began to move slowly towards the door.

"I declare," she broke in, as her attention was recalled to him by this movement, "it does seem a pity for you to go out again into the cold. If you think you would be better here, I have an empty room." But at this moment a carriage was heard to stop before the door, and, startled into a new train of thought by this unwonted occurrence, she moved towards the front windows, exclaiming, "I do believe they have come now!"

But at her first glance through the curtains, she drew back with a frightened air, and crying, "Oh, what can this mean?' hurried towards the door with every sign of intense agitation.

Mr. Gryce at once took her place at the window, but he did not look out, for at that moment a man's voice was heard in the hall, and the wary detective thought it prudent to resume his *rôle* of the self-absorbed, semi-oblivious old man whose infirmities were so engrossing he had neither eyes nor ears for what went on about him. It was well he did so, for in another moment his imperturbability received a great shock by the certainly unlooked-for entrance of two men bearing a burden which at one glance showed itself to be the inert form of a young woman. From the appearance of one of these he judged him to be Dr. Molesworth. They were followed by the landlady, crying and wringing her hands.

"Mildred, Mildred, what has happened to you, poor girl!" came in piercing tones from the latter, as the sad burden having been deposited on a sofa, she approached, and drew aside the cloak, which had hitherto concealed the face.

"Oh, God! how pale she is! how cold! Doctor, has she only fainted or is she——"

"Dead," came from his lips in deep and thrilling tones, while his gaze sought the landlady's face and rested there

with an intenseness he might not have displayed had he noticed the old man mumbling and chattering to himself in a corner.

"And what has killed her? What has destroyed my poor girl, the very night you hoped to marry her?"

"Shall I tell you?" The doctor had waved the man aside who had assisted him in his fearful task, and now stood with folded arms side by side with the landlady, looking down upon the still, set face which with the blue robe that enshrouded the form were already so well known to the watching detective. "She preferred this bridal to the one I had planned for her. Now you know all." And with just one more deep and searching look at the landlady's startled face, he walked up to his assistant.

"That is all," said he, "I will do the rest. The coroner will probably be here soon and——Who are you?"

This was said to a small, slight man who at this moment appeared in the doorway.

"I am a detective, sir," was the reply, and he was doubtless going to say more, but he caught an unexpected sight of Mr. Gryce, and paused in some confusion. He had recognized a superior.

As for Mr. Gryce himself, he had scarcely noticed the young man; he was too intent upon the doctor, who at the utterance of the word *detective* had wheeled suddenly about with the evident intention of hiding his surprise. But a mirror hung opposite him, and in this the watchful eye of Mr. Gryce detected such an expression of uncontrollable shock and anxiety that he inwardly congratulated himself over the curiosity which had drawn him to this house.

The confusion, if there was such, in the physician's mind was but momentary. In an instant he turned, and confronting the intruder, asked with some severity,—

"And what work is there for a detective here? The young lady has taken poison and is dead. I have notified the coroner——"

"Pardon me," interposed the other, with every appearance of humility and respect, "I have come from the coroner. I am only a messenger, and my errand is to say that as he cannot come till morning it might relieve you to have me stop here and see that there is no interference with the remains.

It is a common duty and it is not the first time I have performed it."

"But it is nobody's duty to watch over this poor girl's body but myself," broke in the landlady with hearty indignation. "Do you forget that it is a woman and a lady you are talking about, and do you think I will stand by and see any man, much less a stranger, take the place which only one of her own sex should occupy? She is no relative of mine, but I loved her, and—doctor, you have some regard for her memory, I am sure; send that man away; he has already been here too long."

And with a care that was almost motherly in its tenderness, she drew the end of the cloak once again over the poor dead face, dropping a tear as she did so, which was not unseen by Mr. Gryce, if it was unappreciated by the stern and bitter-souled physician.

"But, madam——" that stranger began.

"Stop!" cried Dr. Molesworth, "I will explain to her." And in a few words he told her how, in cases of violent death, it was thought advisable for the coroner to see the victim as soon after decease as possible, and when, as in this case, circumstances demanded delay, no one, not even a mother, could rightfully interfere with whatever surveillance the coroner thought it his duty to impose. "So you will let this man stay here, and I will stay too; for it is as much my wish as yours that every respect should be shown to the one whom living I honoured sufficiently to wish to make my wife."

The landlady shook her head with an aggressive air, but made no further protest. Dr. Molesworth pointed to a chair and the representative of the coroner sat down; then, while the former glanced at Mr. Gryce, who had just caught his attention, a slight noise was heard in the hall, and a second stranger entered.

"What does this mean?" angrily cried the doctor. "Is it possible that the front door has been left open?"

And brusquely pushing by the new comer, he shut the offending door, and then, coming back, asked his business of the last arrival.

The fellow, who was slimmer than the other and much more dapper, pulled a small book and pencil from his pocket. It

was enough. Dr. Molesworth recognized a reporter, and gave his irritation full play.

"You are intruding," cried he. "This is a private house, and no one asked you to enter. As for the calamity which has occurred, learn of it how and where you will; I shall tell you nothing."

But this young man was not one to be easily daunted. "Do you wish me to make up an article out of surmises?" he inquired. "A young girl of this city has died in a carriage and the people have a right to know how. Shall I say by use of the knife, or——"

"Scoundrel!" came from Dr. Molesworth's lips. "You deserve chastising, but I shall simply see that you do, what you have probably never done before, tell the exact truth." And turning to the detective at his side, he exclaimed, "Note what I tell the fellow. If he alters a word or interposes one item that is not borne out by what he observes and hears here, I will see that he is discharged from his place. I know what paper he is on, and I know the editor, and my threat is no idle one. Now let him listen. This young lady, Mildred Farley by name, was engaged to marry me to-night. Being an orphan without friends—pardon me, Mrs. Olney, I should have said relatives, perhaps—and not being well, she thought a private marriage at a hotel would be most suitable. I agreed with her, and the arrangements were all made for the ceremony. But she was sicker than I supposed. The symptoms of fever which I had perceived in her this afternoon increased rapidly on my departure, and when I returned before the specified hour to marry her, I found she had fled, leaving an incoherent note behind, which so alarmed me that I went out at once, and jumping into my phaeton, drove up and down the streets searching for her. I did not find her of course; and remembering an important prescription I had promised to send a patient of mine, I despatched my driver with it, and was taking my phaeton home myself when I suddenly detected a woman seated on one of the steps in Twenty-second Street, whose appearance struck me as familiar. Though no believer in miracles, I accepted this one without scruple, and jumping from my carriage, went up to her and soon saw that I was right in supposing I had found Miss Farley. She was very ill and did not know me. 'I am

sleepy,' she said, and dropped her head on my shoulder as I lifted her up. At the same moment I heard the sound of breaking glass, as if a small phial had slipped to the side-walk and been shivered, while a pungent odour rose to my nostrils so suggestive of the poison known as prussic-acid, that I felt greatly alarmed, and hastily carrying her to my phaeton, I put her in and drove as fast as I could towards home. But soon her increasing pallor and general condition convincing me that death was near, I stopped at the drug-store on the corner of Nineteenth Street, and leaving her in the phaeton, ran in and asked one of the clerks to assist me in bringing her into the store. He consented and we went back to the phaeton, but only to find that I was too late. She had died in my absence."

"Horrible!" burst from the landlady's lips, and even the callous reporter looked shocked and a trifle ashamed.

"Where she got the poison," continued the doctor, "remains to be found out. Perhaps she bought it after leaving the hotel, perhaps she had had it with her there as a medicine. If so, she may have taken an overdose without being conscious of her danger. I only know I was her physician, and had never prescribed it to her, nor did I know she suffered from any ailment that required such a tonic."

"And is that all? Will you tell me nothing more?"

"You have a very good article," remarked the doctor, dryly. "Leave something for the future." And the reporter had to be content, and the detectives too.

The reporter gone, Dr. Molesworth turned again towards Mr. Gryce.

"And who are you?" he asked.

"I was going to say I didn't know," answered the seemingly trembling old man. "I am in pain and want to get home. Will one of you help me down the steps?"

"In pain!" repeated the doctor, who was not by any means a hard-hearted man.

"Yes, rheumatism in the stomach, I think. I came for some opium, but I won't wait any longer. They will worry about me at home. Besides, I feel a bit better now."

His manner was so natural, his look so in accordance with the character he had assumed, that Dr. Molesworth suspected nothing, and kindly held out his arm. But he found the alleged detective had forestalled him.

"Let me do this business," he entreated, with a great show of good-nature and respect. "I have nothing else to do, and am used to old men." And nodding graciously to his superior, he led him carefully out, whispering as soon as the lintel of the door had hidden them from view. "What orders? Do you smell anything wrong here?"

"Watch," was the quiet but emphatic command. "Note everything, even to the lifting of an eyelid, but say nothing, and do not seem to watch."

Then, as they reached the front door, "Don't be hurt if I send some one else here. They know your character too well." And with this the elder man went out with a slow and hobbling step. The pain and distress of that evening had not been altogether assumed.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME POINTS.

Mr. Gryce had only a look to go upon, but it was a look that spoke volumes. When a man shrinks from the eye of a detective, he has something to conceal, and when that something is connected with the death of a young girl by poison, it behoves an officer of the law to follow that man till he finds out what that something is.

It was therefore with some interest that he received in the early morning a summons from the gentleman who held the office of coroner at this time, to come down to his office and have a talk with him concerning this case of Mildred Farley; nor was it long before he presented himself at the place designated. He found the coroner alone, and the following conversation ensued.

"Well, Gryce," said the latter, "I have just come from the house where you played the part of a sick patient so successfully last night. May I ask how you chanced to be so prompt on the scene of action? Do you scent out mysterious cases, or had you any knowledge which led you to that especial spot

just at the moment when your presence was possibly most required.

"Both," was the good-natured reply. "Something which I called curiosity, but which I am fain now to consider instinct, made me an intruder in Dr. Molesworth's home last night. But I had a bit of knowledge to start with that roused this curiosity, and it is of this I want to speak, if you think the subject worthy of discussion or Dr. Molesworth anything but what he seems—a good, honest, and reliable man."

"I think," returned the coroner, slowly, "any subject of this kind worthy of discussion; and, as for Dr. Molesworth, he stands high, but so do a great many others whose testimony we are called upon to question every day of our lives. You need not stop on his account if you have seen or discovered anything which contradicts his story."

"What is his story?"

"Didn't you hear it? I understood that he told all he had to tell in your presence."

"He told two stories."

"How two?"

"One with his lips, another with his face; that is what makes me doubt him."

"You do doubt him, then?"

Mr. Gryce tapped the table before him with an abstracted air, murmured some unintelligible words, and looked as if he thought he had replied.

"Come!" cried the other, "your reasons? You usually have good ones."

"Yes!" assented Mr. Gryce, "I usually have; but in this case it would be hard for me to tell you just what they are. I feel that there is something back of this affair which we do not see; but I am not ready as yet to go any further or even to express any suspicions, say that I have any. The facts which I have been able to glean in the short space of time we have had are meagre, but interesting. Perhaps you can add to them; if so, our conference may lead to something. This is what I know." And he related first what Dr. Molesworth had to say about the matter the evening before. When he had finished, he asked, "Does this story agree with what he told you this morning?"

"Exactly."

"Very good. So much for so much. Now for the side-lights. I saw the girl myself yesterday afternoon."

"You?"

"Yes; I saw her, but I did not speak to her, nor did I recognize her for the person she was. Indeed, I took her for another woman, whom she greatly resembled. It was at the C—— Hotel."

"Ah!"

"I need not enter into any further particulars about this circumstance as it does not concern the affair before us, which stands quite apart by itself. Enough that for reasons of my own I played the spy on this young woman, and saw her when she thought herself alone, in the privacy of her own apartment. This was some time after noon, and the great fact which I wish to bring before you is this, that she was then to all appearance (and my eye is accustomed to read countenances) perfectly happy, and had not in face or bearing the least trace of sickness."

"That is a point, certainly."

"Note it, and then add to it this, that being still under the error of which I have spoken, I went back to the hotel some three or four hours later, and wishing to confirm a former suspicion, sought my vantage spot again, and, in conjunction with another witness, whose testimony you will not need, looked in upon this Miss Farley again, when I perceived that a great change had passed over her. But it was not that of sickness. From happiness she had descended to misery, and in her pallor and wild unrestrained attitudes I could detect the expression of despair, but none of bodily suffering or mental disorder. Now, what had occasioned this change in her in a space of time so short? I think I can answer that it was an interview with Dr. Molesworth. For, according to his own story and that of the hotel-clerk, he was with her for a half-hour or so in the afternoon; and though, upon going out, he told the hotel-clerk he was coming back in the evening to marry her, something in his determination or in what had taken place at their interview, had destroyed in her every vestige of hope and happiness. For it was anything but an expectant bride whom I saw after this visit, as it had been anything but an anxious woman whom I had seen before it."

"So! so!"

"Now, when did she fly?" the detective pursued. "Shortly after I saw her last. And how? On foot and quietly. The hall-boy saw her go out, and he says she had her little bag on her arm and looked decent and composed; not like a woman in delirium, nor even like one who meditates any dreadful crime. But then a boy's observation does not go for much, and we will let it pass. What we will remember though is this, that she had a veil on which covered her face, and that this veil was brown, or, at least, of a very dark colour. Two persons have told me so—the boy whose word, as I say, goes for little, and the chamber-maid, who, though she did not see her go out, had had ample opportunity for observing her veil earlier in the afternoon, and whose word on such a subject does go for something. But, and mark the fact well, for it seems to me important, the veil that was clinging to her dress when she was brought into Mrs. Olney's parlour was grey and decidedly light—not the same one at all, according to description, which she wore when she went out of the hotel. What is the conclusion? That she stopped somewhere. Where? Another thing to find out. And now about the poison. I went through Twenty-second Street very soon after leaving Mrs. Olney's last night, and in front of one of the houses between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, I found a broken phial reeking with the smell of bitter almonds. So that part of his story is true. I have brought the bits of broken glass. Here they are."

The coroner looked at them curiously, smelled them, and glanced up at Mr. Gryce.

"Well?" he suggested, in an inquiring tone. He felt that the detective's silence meant something.

"Don't you notice anything peculiar about these pieces?"

"No; to be frank, I don't."

"Poison that is bought at a drug-store usually has a label on the bottle."

"True."

"And this phial once had a label on it."

"I see."

"But it has been washed off, or rather rubbed off by a moistened hand. There are bits of it still remaining."

"I perceive them."

"What inference can we draw? That caution has been

used. Now caution is not an attribute of the suicide, whether that suicide was an intentional one or the result of a mistake."

"Humph!"

"And then there is another thing that puzzles me. Dr. Molesworth declares he found her sitting on the steps. I looked at those steps; there was a light snow lying on them, and this snow lay white and undisturbed as it would not have done if a woman had been sitting there. But then some little time had elapsed since he removed her from the spot and enough fresh snow may have fallen to cover up the traces which her skirts must have left behind her."

"Very possible."

"Only those skirts were not damp about the edges as they must have been if she had been sitting on a stoop under these circumstances. And this to my mind is good evidence that she did not sit there. I would sooner believe she had been carried down the stoop and placed in the phaeton without putting her foot to ground; only it happens to be General ——'s house and the thing is impossible."

"But how could you know about her skirts; you did not go near her?"

"But Harrison did, the man you yourself sent there to investigate."

"And you have seen him since?"

"Five minutes after you did, sir."

The coroner laughed, he did not understand such zeal.

"I knew you would send for me," resumed Mr. Gryce, "and I wanted to have something to talk about."

"I see," said the coroner; "well, go on."

"I am almost at the end of my rope, only—did you wonder what had become of Miss Farley's bag?"

"I did not know she had any."

"The people at the hotel say she had, and here is the ocular proof of it." And Mr. Gryce produced from under his coat a small but neat hand-bag of black leather, having on one side two ornamental steel letters, one of which was M and the other F. "The initials of her name, you perceive."

The coroner nodded.

"You wonder where I got this bag? Why, in the most natural place in the world; it was in the phaeton."

"Ah, the phaeton!"

"When I went out of the house last night I found that vehicle standing where it had been left, in front of the steps; and as, according to the doctor's story, it had been the real scene of death, I naturally thought you would wish to have a look at it. I accordingly took possession of it, and not seeing what else I could do with it at that time of night, drove it into a stable near by. I expected every moment to be stopped by somebody and so forced to reveal my true character; but circumstances favoured me, and I got off with my prize unmolested. You will find it in charge of an officer at 66, West —— Street."

"That is all right; but what about the look *you* took? You never left the phaeton for me to examine first."

Mr Gryce smiled grimly at the plain gold stud he wore as a cuff button. "I see you understand me." He then admitted, apologetically, "'Twas dark, and I did not find much. Still, I found something—the bag for instance."

The coroner looked at him with a doubtful air. Did he suspect too, for the first time, that the detective was concealing something from him? If so, he said nothing, and Mr. Gryce went on, blandly,—

"This bag may have stories to tell. Suppose you open it, sir."

The coroner nodded and did so. A number of toilet articles came to light and some linen. All was fresh and neat.

"Nothing that is likely to help us," asserted the coroner. "No vestiges of poison, no letters, not even a scrap of writing of any kind."

Mr. Gryce did not commit himself.

"I would like to take an inventory of the articles," said he.

The coroner allowed him to do so, and then inquired,—

"What about witnesses? Have you seen the clerks at the drug-store?"

"Yes, they have nothing to add to his story. He stopped there, came in as he said, told his fears, and asked for assistance. One of them, Herbert Black by name, at once responded; but before he could reach the door, the doctor came rushing back, crying out, "It is too late, she is dead," led the way to the phaeton, where they saw the poor girl tumbled in a heap,

white and lifeless. They were young men and did not know enough to take her by the hand and see if she were yet cold. They took the doctor's words for granted, knowing him so well, and feeling a natural indisposition to interfere in a matter at once so horrible and so delicate, only asked what they should do to help him. 'I am going to take her straight home,' he told them, and requested one of them to telephone to you and the other to run along at his side as far as the house. This latter duty fell to Mr. Black, and it was he who helped the doctor to carry the poor girl in. That is all. I worked a half-hour but could get no more out of him."

"And the clergyman?"

"Has nothing to impart."

"And the driver? You surely have seen the driver, he whom he sent out of the way with a prescription to some patient or other?"

Mr. Gryce's brows knit.

"I have had but nine hours to work in," said he, "and one of them was thrown away on that boy. I set a watch for him in three places and succeeded in getting the first word with him. But he had only one story to tell, and he told it doggedly. It was in strict accordance with that of Dr. Molesworth. He had been ordered to come to the C—— Hotel at a quarter past eight to take Mr. Pease home after the expected ceremony. He had gone there on foot, Dr. Molesworth himself having driven Mr. Pease to the hotel, and finding the phaeton at the door, had waited beside it for the clergyman to come out. But before this could happen the doctor reappeared, and, declaring that matters had not gone as he wished, took his place in the phaeton and beckoned him in beside him; after which they rode about the streets till the doctor suddenly stopped the horse somewhere near Union Square, and commanding him to get out, gave him a bit of paper, which he told him to take as quick as he could to Mr. Monroe in Seventy-third Street. He obeyed him and had only just come back. This is what the boy said, and all he would say; but I know as well as I know anything that he did not tell me the truth; for when I asked him what cars he took, he stared at me for a moment helplessly, then said, 'The Madison Avenue cars,' which story he stuck to, but as

one who is very much frightened sticks to a statement he knows is false but dares not abandon."

"I will make him tell the truth," asserted the coroner.

"It is to be hoped so. He is not dull but he is mighty obstinate, and is to all appearance very much afraid of his master."

"I know the species; I can manage him."

Mr. Gryce looked doubtful, but did not pursue the subject. On the contrary, he remarked,—

"I forgot to give you another point I have made. Molesworth says that after leaving the hotel he rode through the streets searching for his missing bride. Now, a person who searches goes slowly, and when he finds what he seeks in the condition in which Miss Farley was found, he still goes slowly. But Dr. Molesworth's horse had been driven far and fast, as the state he was in when I drove him into the stable amply showed."

"A point? I should think so!"

"And that is not all. Seeing that the horse went a trifle lame, I examined his feet, and there, wedged between the shoe and the hoof of his right fore-foot, I found a bit of gravel which I dare wager never came from the streets about Madison Square. As the horse was not lame enough for it to have been there long, I drew the inference that Miss Farley was searched for in other regions than those his story would lead you to surmise."

"*Very* likely."

"Dr. B——," Mr. Gryce now remarked, "I want time."

"Good!" was the reply, "and how much?"

"Well, that I cannot tell. Maybe hours will answer and maybe I shall want days. There is all her past history to learn, and where she was on that short vacation to which the landlady alludes. If you want to get at the truth, postpone your inquest a little. I won't let the matter drag."

"I see; Gryce is awake, and all because of a look."

"Less things than that have sent a man to the gallows before now. Intricate locks have small keys."

"And you hope to open this one?"

Mr. Gryce's cuff-button flashed. It had received a glance which recalled the days when Mr. Gryce's glance meant something.

CHAPTER VIII.

FACTS AND SURMISES.

Mrs. Olney's indignation against the detective Harrison did not last long. Once relieved from the constraint of his superior's presence, he showed himself so respectful and considerate that her prejudices were soon vanquished, and he had more than one opportunity to approach that quarter of the room over which she had promised to hold such a jealous watch.

It was at one of these times, while he was waiting for Mrs. Olney to drink the glass of water he had brought her, I believe, that he discovered the fact in regard to Miss Farley's garments of which Mr. Gryce made mention in his interview with the coroner; and had it not been for Dr. Molesworth's watchful eye and open ear he might have gleaned other information still more useful; for Mrs. Olney had nothing to conceal, and much to impart, and Mrs. Olney dearly liked an appreciative listener. But as it was, he had no sooner beguiled her into conversation, than some movement of the doctor attracted the good woman's attention, and stopped the flow of speech into which she had been betrayed. And once when he thought he was really on the point of learning some important fact, that same grave and determined individual had boldly interfered with the remark that Mrs. Olney had better not tire herself, as she would need all her strength to answer the coroner's questions on the morrow.

It was therefore with something like relief that in the early morning he heard the bell ring, and saw the coroner enter, followed by a woman, whose kind, motherly face did not deceive him as to the part she was to play in the drama. The long struggle with the severe, gloomy-browed doctor, who had the faculty of making his presence felt in a heavy, oppressive kind of way even when he did not speak or appear to hear, was over at last, and he would now have the opportunity to gather such fragments of information as he knew would be acceptable to Mr. Gryce.

But for some reason or other it was destined that he should not shine in this affair. Though he had a merry time downstairs, and went in his search for knowledge as high as the room in which the unhappy girl had lodged, he gleaned but little of interest; so that when Mr. Gryce came, he had really nothing to report beyond the slight fact of which I have already made mention.

When, therefore, the elder detective announced to the coroner that he had all the girl's past history to learn, he was stating nothing but the simple fact, and it was to this task he addressed himself as soon after leaving that official as circumstances would permit.

His first attempt succeeded as well as could be expected, Mrs. Olney receiving him in his real character with as good a grace, and telling him all she knew in as candid a spirit as if he had not so basely played upon her credulity the evening before.

Her story as volunteered to him, and doubtless to the coroner before him, was as follows :—

Mildred Farley was an orphan, her widowed mother having died about a month before in the very house and in the very room which she herself was occupying at the time of her own untimely end. This mother was a very attractive woman of the gentle, retiring type, whose melancholy eyes told of a life of mingled love and sorrow. Her daughter, who had appeared to idolize her, sacrificed everything to her comfort, and it was mainly on account of this mother's ill-health that Mildred worked so hard at a trade manifestly beneath her capacity and breeding. For Mrs. Farley had been brought up in luxury, and had many wants which could only be satisfied by means greater than those usually acquired by a young girl in Mildred's position. But work and self-denial will do much, and Mrs. Farley never had any reason to complain. Nor with her death had Mildred's exertions ceased. Though the necessity for such severe labour seemed to be past, she had shown no disposition to indulge herself. From early morning till late at night she had sat at her work, finishing one beautiful dress after another till Mrs. Olney was fain to believe that she had some new object in view, and would ere long unite her fortunes with those of her fellow-boarder, the doctor.

But though the young people were to all appearance very

good friends, meeting constantly at table and frequently in the parlours as well, the anxious landlady was soon assured by the physician's abstracted and reticent air, and as she thought by Mildred's uniform look of indifference, that her fond desire was not to be realized. When, therefore, Mildred informed her one morning that she was going away for a little visit, the good woman never thought of the doctor in connection with her departure, nor did she then or afterwards harbour any suspicion that her bright young boarder was contemplating marriage with any one, least of all with him. For if this busy girl had broken in upon her usual habits, he had not, nor was there anything in his bearing or conversation to lead her to suppose that he meditated any change in his mode of life.

The news of their proposed marriage, with all the tragic developments which had immediately ensued, had therefore awakened in the whole household the greatest feeling of surprise; nor could Mrs. Olney, for one, realize that the young and blooming girl upon whom the labour and sorrows of the last few months had left scarcely a trace, had succumbed in a moment to the temptation of suicide, no matter by what sickness she had been seized.

"I know that folks are taken dreadful sudden sometimes," the old lady remarked at this juncture. "But I cannot reconcile such an end with what I knew of Mildred. It isn't in keeping with her character. If she had loved the doctor more or hated him more I could perhaps have understood it. But she was healthy in body and soul, a frank, young, hopeful girl, and I don't see——" She said no more, but her lips took a grim line, and Mr. Gryce perceived that his suspicions, vague as they were, were not altogether unshared by this warm-hearted woman and true friend of Mildred Farley.

He therefore started with good hope upon a line of questions by which he expected to reach some clue that would help him to the end he felt rather than saw before him. But though his skill was great the result was meagre, and after a lengthened conversation the only facts he thought worth recording in his mind were these :—

That there had certainly been something peculiar in the young girl's actions of late; a certain reticence about her

work, for instance, such as she had never before displayed. Though she had made several handsome dresses during the last month (as the scraps lying about her room sufficiently testified), she had never shown them to her landlady as she had previously been accustomed to do, but kept herself and them locked up in her room till the time came for taking them home. And yet these dresses were certainly for other people and not for herself, she having been seen carrying them out in a great box many times during the four weeks she had kept herself such a prisoner.

That the person for whom they were destined was rich, for she came several times to be fitted, and always in a carriage.

That the place to which Mildred had gone on a visit was not known to her landlady, nor, as far as could be learned, by any one else in the house.

That Mildred was invariably well and had never, to all appearance, stood in need of a doctor's prescription.

That Dr. Molesworth had been Mrs. Farley's physician and in this way seen much of the daughter. But that he had never appeared to take advantage of this fact, nor could Mrs. Olney recall the least token of an existing affection between them. If lovers, they had been very circumspect—too circumspect as it now appeared; such seeming indifference could cover nothing good.

That, contrary to their usual open relations, they had been seen just once whispering together on the stairs. But even then it was not as lovers whisper, rather like persons who have some business to settle.

That no one in the house ever linked their names together in speaking of them; nor were they ever the subject of jokes among the boarders.

A poor array of seemingly unproductive facts, it is true; but Mr. Gryce was not discouraged. It was from some chance word or petty revelation he expected his clue, not from the open details which every one knew.

His next interview was with the woman who had come with the coroner, and whom he as well as Harrison recognized for an expert female detective. She had taken Mrs. Olney's place beside the dead girl, and from her he hoped to gather a fact about which he was very anxious.

"Well, Mrs. Roberts," he exclaimed, upon seeing her, "did you get the line I sent you?"

"I did, sir."

"And what have you to say?"

"That you are all right. There is a mark of fresh paint on the back of her gown between the shoulder blades."

Mr. Gryce drew a deep breath expressive of great satisfaction. "I thought so," he cried. "And what was its colour, Mrs. Roberts; to a shade, mind?"

"As near as I could judge in the light I had, it was brown, but of a very bright and peculiar tint."

"Right again. I am much obliged to you, very much obliged to you. Does any one else know about this spot?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Very good; it is immaterial. 'Twill take more than one of us to discover where that paint came from, I imagine."

"Any more questions, sir?"

"One. What do you think of Dr. Molesworth?"

"A brooding, dark-browed man, with something on his mind besides grief. I cannot make him out, but this much is certain: you won't get anything out of him till the law makes him speak. He is never off his guard, and will neither make a slip nor forget his dignity. Indeed I have begun to admire him in the short space of time we have been in the same room."

"Humph! and do you think other women likely to share that sentiment?"

"Yes, sir; I understand what you mean, and I say unequivocally, yes. He is a man without one handsome feature; he is also a man without much softness of soul or appreciation of woman, but he has a dangerous eye, and you will find, if you search his history close enough, that more than one woman has been broken against his hard nature. I know the sex and I know the men dangerous to it, and he is not one of the least."

Mr. Gryce was astonished. Dr. Molesworth was the last man he would have thought likely to be agreeable to women; a conclusion which shows, as he afterwards said to himself, how wise it is now and then to take a woman into one's confidence.

"You probably think, then," he remarked, "that it was love

which drove Mildred Farley to her death? But Dr. Molesworth expressly said in my presence, she had chosen death in preference to marriage."

"He did? Well, Dr. Molesworth should know. I would trust his judgment in such matters implicitly."

"Would you trust your life with him if he were angry?"

"Oh, now you want to make use of my woman's intuition. I cannot allow you to, sir, the matter is too serious. Stick to facts, Mr. Gryce, no man can handle them better."

He smiled as he turned away.

"And is not intuition a fact?" he asked. "I have usually found it so."

From Mrs. Roberts he passed to the servants, and from them to Mildred's room. All these investigations had been made by Harrison, but in a mysterious matter like this, Mr. Gryce trusted no one's inspection but his own. As a result, he added the following paragraph to his list of facts:—

That this young dressmaker's time was not entirely devoted to sewing. On her table were various books of study, all bearing the marks of use; and in the desk, which contained nothing else of interest, was a copy-book full of French phrases, evidently written by her hand.

He confiscated a leaf of this book.

On his way downstairs he heard loud talking; it came from one of the rooms on the third floor, and was carried on by two female voices. He quietly stopped a moment to listen. One woman was saying,—

"Too bad, too bad! but I always said no good would come to that girl, after I met her on the stairs so late one night. She was out again and again. I used to listen,—just out of good-will towards her, you know, just out of good-will—and it was twelve o'clock more than once—twelve o'clock! And this was when her mother was so sick, and since too."

"But her work? She had to take that home, you know."

"Her work! It was only a blind. She used to carry that great box empty, I am sure of it, for she set it down once in the hall to tie on her veil more securely, and I was there and laughingly lifted it up. It was very light, Harriet—very light."

"But——"

"Don't talk to me; don't talk to me. There was a secret in that girl's life, and her violent death will prove it. She may have been engaged to the doctor, she may have been going to marry him; but if any one should ask me my opinion I should say that that good man found her out at last, and the shame of it unsettled Miss Mildred, and——"

"But the doctor declares he went to the hotel to marry her. He even took Mr. Pease with him, which he surely would not have done if he had not expected to need his services."

"But Dr. Molesworth is a man in a thousand. He is capable of doing any generous thing. If you had appreciated him as you ought——"

"Mamma, have I ever said I did not appreciate him?"

"Two more fools," was Mr. Gryce's inward comment; but he had gleaned still another paragraph to add to his list:

Mildred Farley had some interest which kept her out late nights. It was not altogether connected with business, as she sometimes resorted to subterfuge to account for her absence.

And connected with this came the mental interrogation,—

"Could Dr. Molesworth, convinced of her ill-faith, have placed before her the two alternatives of death or the public exposure of her fault? Or, darkest surmise of all, could he have taken the matter in his own hands and robbed her of life rather than fulfil his promise of marrying her?"

CHAPTER IX.

LATE EVIDENCE.

A WEEK had passed, and Mr. Gryce is again closeted with the coroner. From his appearance he had not met with the success which he had anticipated in this matter; but then who could tell anything from Gryce's appearance!

"You have finished your inquiries," observed the coroner. "Well, who are your witnesses?"

"Rather, who are yours? I have done nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing that will be of any assistance to you. Either I am getting old or this is a particularly unproductive affair. I can make nothing out of it."

The coroner looked disappointed. "What, with all those points you suggested?"

"What were they? There was a veil found clinging to her garments, which was a different one from that she wore out. But what is a veil? a piece of gauze cut from a length of similar material. Nothing traceable there. All I could do was to make certain that she did not buy it during that evening at any of the stores. Where she did get it I cannot say. It was impossible to find out."

"Well, well?"

"The refuge which she sought after leaving the hotel is a mystery; consequently the place of poisoning, and the circumstances under which the poison was taken or administered. The most careful investigations have been made. Every spot known to the police, where a girl in her condition of mind might seek to hide herself, has been examined, but to no effect. The house, if house she entered, was a private one, and being such, we can only locate it by open measures. The inquest will have to take place."

"I see; I see; and you have failed also to follow the trail of the doctor's wanderings?"

"He left none; the only man who can tell us anything about his movements at that time, persists in denying all knowledge of them."

"Is there a Mr. Monroe of Seventy-second Street?"

"Yes; and he did receive a prescription that night by the hand of Dr. Molesworth's coloured driver. But it was not as important a one as the doctor would make out. He would not have suffered if he had not received it till the next day."

"Still the boy carried it."

"Yes, and I never doubted that he did, only I don't believe he went by the Madison Avenue cars, and I doubt very much if he went from any corner near Union Square."

"But you cannot prove it."

"Not by any means now at my command."

"The doctor, then, seems to have the best of it."

"Decidedly; and that is a hard word for Ebenezar Gryce to say. I cannot even make sure of such simple matters as the place in which the girl spent the two or three days previous to her death; nor for whom she made the dresses she was at work upon during the last few weeks of her life. All is dark, and every trail is blind. Publicity is all that will help us. I have tried secret workings long enough."

"Then you wish the inquest to be held immediately?"

"As soon as your convenience will permit."

"And your hope is——"

"My determination is to have the proceedings published as widely in the papers as possible, and my hope is that it will cause witnesses to spring up who can help us out of our little difficulty. Some one in this great city or its vicinity must know where she spent the hours before taking that fatal dose; and that some one may speak. I suppose there is no doubt that the dose taken was large enough to cause speedy death?"

"No; the autopsy settled that."

"But not large enough to cause an immediate one?"

"Upon that the doctors disagree."

"It is a pity; else we would have Molesworth on his own story."

"He probably knew that. Molesworth understands poisons; he has made them a study."

"And I have made him a study; but he is impenetrable. It is not of many men I can say that."

"Well, well, we will have the inquest." Then, as Mr. Gryce rose to go, "How about that spot of paint, Gryce? No clue in that either?"

Mr. Gryce sat down again. "There ought to be," he acknowledged. "There is a mark on the lining of the phaeton, but it is very slight, while that on her dress is very distinct, showing that the paint came off from her dress upon the phaeton. She had consequently been leaning against a freshly-painted surface somewhere; and as the paint was of a peculiar shade, I thought I should be able to trace it. But—" he shook his head—"like all the rest it proved a blind trail."

He was going for the second time when the coroner stopped him.

"Have you thought that if Dr. Molesworth's story is true, and he lifted the dying girl from the stoop into his phaeton, he would naturally have a smudge of that paint on his sleeve?"

"Don't humiliate me; it is there."

"Well, well," remarked the coroner, as he bowed the detective out, "I see but one conclusion to the matter. We shall have to believe the doctor's story."

"You did not see the look on his face which I did," returned Mr. Gryce.

The next day the inquest was held and the proceedings voluminously published. Witnesses from all quarters were examined and the matter relentlessly sifted. But no more was elicited from the various parties on oath than they had been willing to volunteer at the solicitations of the detective; nor though the utmost discretion was displayed in the examination of the doctor could his testimony be shaken or his assertions disproved.

Some of his answers merit recording. To the question as to when and where he became engaged to Miss Farley, he replied with great dignity but with no apparent reserve,—

"Miss Farley never said she would marry me till the morning of the day she died. Then I received a letter from her saying that she would marry me that day at the C—— Hotel. I had received manifestations of affection from her before, but never any promise."

"You have professed attachment for her, then, some time previous to this event?"

"I first offered myself to her beside her mother's deathbed."

There was feeling in his voice and there was reserve, and the result upon the minds of those present was something like awe. No one blamed the coroner for the respect with which he next inquired whether the letter received from Miss Farley was still in Dr. Molesworth's possession.

"It is not," was the reply. "I invariably destroyed every line I received from her. It is a custom of mine to preserve no letters."

This struck the mass unfavourably. It seemed both un-

natural and uncalled-for. But he was in nowise affected by the changed looks about him. There were enough old and discreet wiseacres present to nod approval to a caution they perhaps wished they had themselves maintained during their long lives.

"Then you were but following out your usual habit when you burned the note which Miss Farley left behind her at the hotel?"

"If I may say so—yes."

"You have, then, no objection to telling us what the note contained?"

"None whatever, if I could. But it was a string of unmeaning phrases, of which only one sentence was clear."

"And that was?"

"'I want my friends about me; it isn't respectable.' Yet she was the one who proposed the marriage," volunteered the doctor, "and at the interview we held in the afternoon no demur was made by her, either as regarded the wedding itself or the manner in which I proposed to have it conducted."

"Will you give us the details of that interview?"

"As nearly as I can, sir. It was such a one as you would expect from a delicate-minded woman who had taken a very important step and was not quite sure how it would be received by her lover. At first she seemed only anxious to learn how I felt about the matter, and when I could not truthfully say she had chosen a very auspicious time for our nuptials, she burst into tears and then became so feverish and incoherent I saw she was not well, and at once began to comfort her. She thereupon grew calmer and listened with attention while I told her of the arrangements which had suggested themselves to me, not making, as I have said, any objection to them either then or at any time before I left."

"And what was the manner of your parting?"

"It was affectionate on my part, but I am free to say there was some constraint on hers. With all my efforts to the contrary I had wounded her susceptibilities, sharpened as they were by incipient illness, and she was too much of a woman not to show it. But I never expected more than a little unpleasantness, and was as much shocked as anybody when I returned and found her gone."

"One more question in this connection, Dr. Molesworth. The clerk testifies that the hour you set for your wedding was nine, yet you came back with the clergyman as early as a quarter after eight. How was that?"

"I was anxious, sir. The more I thought of it, the more I was convinced that Miss Farley was on the point of a serious illness. I went early on her account."

This was all very satisfactory, too satisfactory for Mr. Gryce. Telegraphing, by a gesture, to the coroner that he had a suggestion to make, he sent him a line or two written on the back of one of the reporters' note-books, which, upon reading, the coroner remarked to the witness:

"You were alone with Miss Farley in room 153 of the C—— Hotel when this interview occurred of which you speak?"

"Most certainly, sir."

"A room containing an alcove shut off by curtains?"

"I believe there were curtains there, but I did not look to see what they shut off."

"How, then, do you know that you two were alone?"

It was but a lightning's flash, that look of irrepressible shock and dismay which crossed Dr. Molesworth's face at this intimation. But the coroner saw it as Mr. Gryce had seen it on a former important occasion, and he felt as the detective had felt then, that it outweighed all the witness's words and his most plausible explanations.

"I took it for granted we were," he was saying the next moment in his most even tones. "If you have a witness to the contrary, let her be produced, she may assist me in remembering just what did pass between Miss Farley and myself."

It was a bold stroke and it succeeded. They had no witness and he soon saw it, and the colour which had slightly left his lips came back, and his bearing became almost disdainful.

The coroner, who was still following Mr. Gryce's suggestions, regarded him with unabated respect.

"You say *her*," he smiled. "Why not him?"

"Because no man would stoop to listen."

The women in the crowd, and there were many, burst forth at this into anything but an inaudible murmur. But the

coroner, with a smile and a sally, averted the rising storm, and the examination continued. But not in the same line, for the coroner, who was now not only convinced that he had a man of doubtful trustworthiness before him, but also of no common intelligence and skill, foresaw that the interests of justice would be better advanced by a seeming acceptance of the witness's explanations and a consequent lulling of any fears he might entertain. He, therefore, while pursuing his inquiries closely and to the point, took care to do so in a way that left the doctor all his self-respect; a course which evidently met with Mr. Gryce's approval, for he introduced no more suggestions, but confined himself entirely to giving confidences to and receiving them from the spectacle-case he held tightly clenched in his hand.

It is therefore to be supposed he saw nothing worthy his attention in the doctor's answers in regard to his pursuit of the flying bride; [nor could there have been any new fact elicited in regard to his final discovery of the same. Therefore, as Mr. Gryce was a man upon whose judgment in such matters we can rely, we will pass over this portion of the examination and come at once to the questions with which it closed. They were delicate in their nature, and were put with as much consideration as possible.

"Dr. Molesworth, during your acquaintance with Miss Farley, have you ever had reason to suppose she was receiving addresses from any other gentleman than yourself?"

It was an unexpected attack and the doctor paused a moment before replying. Then he answered, distinctly,—

"No."

"Excuse my persistency, but the mystery of Miss Farley's action in this whole matter has not been made clear even with the explanations you have given us. I must therefore ask if you know of any other man in whom Miss Farley might have been interested?"

There was no hesitation this time.

"Miss Farley had given her heart to me. I never had reason to doubt it or her up to the moment I found she had fled from me."

"Were you in the habit of meeting her out of the house where you both lived?"

"No, sir. The one interview we had at the hotel is the

only one which ever took place between us outside of Mrs. Olney's house."

"Yet your meetings there were infrequent, and, according to all accounts, in the presence of other persons."

"Miss Farley was a pure and unprotected girl, sir. She knew my sentiments, and I waited for her response in perfect confidence. I should have blamed myself if I had attracted notice to our position by any undue display of my regard."

"Then you cannot tell us what kept Miss Farley out oftentimes till twelve o'clock at night?"

"No; but I can suggest that it was her business of dress-making. She had more than one patron living far up town."

"Do you know the names of her patrons?"

"I do not."

"None of them?"

The doctor's brows came together.

"None," he repeated.

"One question more. Can you tell us where Miss Farley spent the last few days of her life?"

"I cannot; she did not tell me."

"Did you know she was going away on a visit?"

"Yes, but I knew no more. I did not ask her any particulars about the matter, and she volunteered none."

"You can at least tell us from what place the letter was post-marked which you received the morning of her death."

"It was not post-marked at all. It came by the hands of a district-messenger."

"Can you give us the number of the boy?"

"I cannot; but he came from the C—— Hotel; the lady was already there when she wrote it."

This closed the proceedings of the day and Dr. Molesworth's testimony. Clear, precise, and plausible had been all his replies, and had it not been for a nameless something hard to describe, he would have gained credit from the officers who conducted his examination, as well as from the public who listened to it. As it was, Mr. Gryce was not in the least shaken in his suspicions, and he waited with considerable confidence for the developments which a publication of the young physician's testimony would bring. But days passed, the inquest came to an end, and no new witness appeared. The verdict was even rendered, and the affair dropped from

the newspapers, where it had been kept as long as possible, and still no new light came to reward the patience of the watchful detective. This was owing in part to the fact that he had not allowed Mildred's picture to be reproduced in the gazettes. With the exception of a sketch taken of her as she lay in Mrs. Olney's parlour, and which bore the same resemblance to her that it did to many another woman of fine proportions and regular features, he had resisted any attempt at presenting her lineaments to the public. His reasons for this were wholly disinterested. Bearing as she did so close a likeness to Miss Gretorex, now Mrs. Cameron, that the difference between them could only be detected by the most careful eye, he hesitated out of pure consideration for her and the man whom he had once before made the victim of unnecessary suffering.

Besides, no good photograph of Mildred could be found, and Mr. Gryce was by far too honest a man to lend for any such use the portrait of Miss Gretorex, however satisfactory it might have been to those who would have been glad of a copy of Mildred's features on any terms.

And so another week went by.

But the next was not destined to pass without an event. As Mr. Gryce was deliberating at his own house one morning, a stranger entered, in whose important air and courteous but mysterious manner he read news.

"Are you the detective, Gryce?" this person asked.

"That is my name and calling," was the ready answer.

"I have a line or two here which I will trouble you to read," said the gentleman, handing him a note.

It was from the superintendent of police, and ran thus:—

"Listen to what the bearer of this has to say. He will undoubtedly interest you."

"May I inquire your name?" asked Mr. Gryce.

The stranger nodded and gave it. It was one well known in the Union League, and Mr. Gryce, upon hearing it, looked with renewed interest at its owner, whose face and form were of a marked elegance, almost approaching to dandyism.

"Your business?" the detective now asked, laconically but not ungraciously. This young scion of one of New York's oldest families had never forfeited the respect of any one.

Indeed he was very favourably known as a young man of great good-nature and unquestioned honour.

The young gentleman posed himself—he was not above producing small effects—and then quietly remarked :—

"There was an inquest held not long ago over the remains of a young girl who died from poison. Mildred Farley was her name."

Mr. Gryce nodded. He had no difficulty in hiding his intense and sudden interest, for his confidant at this juncture was the elegant seal which hung from the watch-chain of his visitor, and that seal was a sphinx.

"I read the account of that inquest," continued the young man ; "and one statement made by the gentleman who professed to know the most about the matter was false."

"Ah ! let us hear," returned Mr. Gryce.

"He said, if you remember, that he found the young woman on a stoop in Twenty-second Street, and that he lifted her up to carry her to his phaeton, when a bottle fell from her hand to the side-walk and broke."

"I remember."

"As that bottle had held poison, and just the poison from which the young girl is known to have died, it is a matter of some importance, I presume, to know the exact truth about it ?"

"It certainly is, Mr. K——."

The young gentleman took another attitude, less graceful but more impressive than the first.

"I can tell you something about it," he affirmed ; "I was there."

"*There ?*"

"I had been—— Well, it does not matter where, but in a place where I do not smoke, and where I should consider it the height of ill manners to light a cigar till I had shut the street door behind me. I therefore prepared to do this in the vestibule, and it being rather a windy night, I had withdrawn into a corner behind the partly-closed door when I heard the sound of wheels, and next moment the slight but unmistakable noise of a small bottle shivering to pieces on the pavement before me. Not understanding the matter, I felt curious, and looking out, beheld a doctor's phaeton just beyond the house going in the direction of Broadway. It had not stopped

in passing, and no young woman had been lifted from the steps. For I had glanced down them the moment before, and they were entirely unoccupied. I stepped on some of the pieces of that broken phial as I went on my way, and I remember the smell that rose from them distinctly. It was that of bitter almonds."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you," rejoined Mr. Gryce. "It is certainly an important piece of evidence. I will not ask why it was not given to us before."

"But I will tell you," responded the other frankly. "I am not much in the habit of mixing in police matters, and I had a natural disinclination to put myself forward. So I let the affair go by. But conscience was too much for me at last. I took my information to the superintendent of police, and he sent me here. That is the history of the matter."

"I accept it," was Mr. Gryce's response, "and I only ask you to be as careful in the future as in the past. Let these facts be considered as ours alone, sir."

"I would be very happy to do this, but unfortunately I was more ready to speak to my friends than I was to the officers of the law. Several members of my club know what I have just told you, and while this is to be regretted, perhaps, it is also the real cause for my being here. For it was in my talk to them that I was led to see the harm which might ensue upon my silence. I will talk no more about it in the future, however."

"And I will be much obliged," remarked Mr. Gryce.

As soon as possible after he had dismissed his visitor, the detective went down to police head-quarters. He had a talk with the superintendent, and that same day, at an hour when he knew he should find Dr. Molesworth at home, he went to see him with a writ of arrest in his pocket.

BOOK II.

THE DARKENING CLOUD.

CHAPTER X.

JULIUS MOLESWORTH.

A SQUARE, dull-looking room with two dim windows facing a high brick wall; a large table covered with phials, boxes of instruments, writing materials, and a few books; a black hair-cloth sofa and two chairs; a dingy carpet and a ceiling which has been unwhitened for years; at the table, and confronting the only bright thing in the room, a hard-coal fire, the stern, immovable figure of a man buried in the deepest thought. Such is Julius Molesworth's office, and such the appearance of Julius Molesworth himself on the afternoon of this his most momentous day.

Let us examine this dull interior a little closer. It is the reception-room, the home, the all of this sombre and inscrutable man. The folding-bed drawn up against the further wall shows this. Yet within the space of its four bare walls not an article of beauty nor an object of taste is to be seen. He did not care for such, he had not the money to buy such if he had wished, and as for the mementos from grateful patients or the tokens of affection from admiring friends, chiefly ladies, which he sometimes received, he would thank the giver for them with cool but careful politeness, and then at the first opportunity toss them into the fire, where he would not even linger long enough to see them burn. He had no wish to preserve any token of woman's weakness about him. Woman's strength on the contrary aroused his admiration.

Among the books which none too closely filled the shelves of the old-fashioned book-case at the opposite end of the room was one, a Bible (the only volume in the collection that was not purely medical in its character), which bore on its fly-leaf in firm but strictly feminine writing, these lines :—

"Live poor, go hungry, go cold, suffer any amount of privation and discomfort, but do not fail in what you undertake, nor be satisfied with anything less than the first excellence."

The book had been his mother's, and these words had been written for him. He loved his mother, though he had never kissed her after his first youth was passed, and he made these words of hers the motto of his life. Had he mentally added anything to them from his own experience? Let us scrutinize his face as the leaping fire-light breaks over it and see if we can determine.

But first what is he brooding over? Such intentness and absorption argue the existence of some heavy subject on his mind. Though we know he has enough to think upon, though we are conscious of a portentous figure slowly approaching this house, whose errand, if known, would lift that bowed head in dismay, is it the death of Mildred Farley or its possible results on his own life which enchains his present thoughts, and gives to his brooding and powerful countenance that look of anxious wrestling with some hidden hope or fear? We will watch him for a moment, studying those features which some one said had not a regular line to recommend them, and see if his eyes turn at the faint creak of the door opening behind him, or if his lips break their firm line as the watchful gaze of one who looks nowhere lightly falls on his abstracted face. At this first moment he is quiet, and the charm of his reverie is unbroken. We have time to note the heavy brow, with its line of dark hair, the large but not unhandsome nose, the smoothly shaven cheeks, and the firm set mouth, about whose corners no sweetness lurks; but we cannot see the eyes, for they are partly closed, and it is in them that his power lies, or so we have been told. Even now there is a glint beneath his eyelashes which moves us strangely if we are feminine and susceptible; a certain mysterious brightness that is not expressive of tenderness, nor even of genius, but which is controlling in its nature, and, together with a well-knit form that is at times

capable of exercising great strength, gives to this otherwise personally ungifted being an attractiveness which many an Adonis might envy. Yet it is not an attractiveness that invites. Those who succumb to his influence do it unsought.

The fairest woman, decked with all the graces that create enchantment about the feminine form, might hesitate long before intruding her beauty upon the sight of this man as he sits here lost in exacting thought. Though she loved him,—though she longed with all her passionate spirit to touch with caressing hand the loose dark lock that fell somewhat carelessly over his forehead, she would ask herself if she dared before she allowed her hand to steal to his brow, or her lips to breathe his name. Alone, sufficient to himself, he battled against his evil angels or fought with his good ones, without assistance, comfort or diversion; his one desire to know his profession thoroughly, his one ambition to be recognized in it as the greatest physician of the age, the most learned and the most successful.

For this he had struggled from boyhood. For this he had borne cold and hunger and poverty as his mother advised. For this he had been content with present insignificance, confident that the day would yet dawn when his fame amongst the respectable poor of the East Side would spread to those precincts of wealth and intelligence, where success is followed by distinction, and distinction is followed by power.

Indeed he was not sure but that this fortunate day was at hand. He had only recently been placed in charge of a case so peculiar and complicated that success in its treatment could not fail to yield him the fame he so coveted. And success was going to be his—he felt it, he knew it. Though some of the most eminent physicians in the city had attempted a cure and failed, he had no hesitation in believing that a certain remedy which he had discovered would reach this very case and produce results that would astonish the whole medical profession. To be sure it would require courage to prescribe it, and an indomitable will to pursue the course of treatment which he felt to be necessary. But there was no lack of these qualities in his nature; while his zeal was so great that he felt that nothing could daunt him, and nobody stand in his way. The opportunity of his life was before him, and he felt bound to improve it. Was he meditating upon this case, and deter-

mining just what his course of treatment should be, as he sat there before the fire? His gradually lightening brow seemed to say yes, and the startling fervour with which he suddenly broke the spell which bound him and arose, told of a secret found rather than of a secret buried.

"Yes, it is—" he cried, "—in small but oft-repeated doses. I would willingly stake my life upon it." And raising his head, he suddenly discerned in the looking-glass which hung opposite him over the mantel-piece a face turned towards him from the open door, which though quiet and composed in every feature, had yet that something in it which tells the observer that, expected or unexpected, his hour has come, and the hopes which he has cherished are vainer than the vainest show.

He saw this face, I say, but he did not at once turn. He had a shock to get over, a course to be resolved upon. When he did turn it was with courtesy and a slight show of surprise. "Excuse me," said he, "I do not receive patients at this hour."

"I am not a patient," returned Mr. Gryce.

The doctor gazed slowly round his room. He did not love it, but it held his all, and there was not an object within it but spoke to his soul of some cherished ambition, or secret all-absorbing wish.

"But you have some business! I recollect your face, but I cannot place you."

"My face is of no account, my business is. Dr. Molesworth, you are a physician of an unrelenting school; the fewest words will answer with you. I am an officer armed with a warrant, and I have come to arrest you as the suspected murderer of Mildred Farley."

The doctor, who had been standing with his back to the table, turned slightly and took up a paper lying there. There were a few words written on it, and he read them before he gave the detective that slight bow which was his only answer to this dread announcement.

"I am charged with placing you in custody," continued the detective. "But if there is anything you wish to do——"

"I would like a half-hour," the doctor responded, firmly. "I have a case——" his voice broke; he turned to his desk and sat down. "Don't interrupt me," he said, laying down

the paper he held and taking up his pen. "I have some memoranda to make. They are important: a matter of life and death to one poor woman."

"Write," said the detective, "I am no gabbler."

And Dr. Molesworth wrote, calmly, thoughtfully, with entire absorption in his subject, or so it seemed to the eye who saw all, though it dwelt only on a phial marked POISON that stood on the doctor's table. Nor did that same eye detect any break in this extraordinary calmness when, the last word written, the physician turned and, handing him the paper, said,—

"It will probably prove unintelligible to you, but it can be easily read by any physician. Keep it till I ask you for it."

Then he turned again to his table and wrote three or four letters, all of which he handed over to the other for inspection, before sealing and directing them. When all this was done he rose, and confronting the detective, observed:

"Now I am ready to go with you. The question is where will you take me. You have arrested me on a suspicion of murder; for this you must have had good reasons, better reasons than appeared at the inquest, or you would not have delayed this arrest. I will not question them, I will only say that your evidence against me is circumstantial—must be, since I did not do this deed; and, as circumstantial evidence is never absolute proof, you are doing me a great injustice by this action, and my patients an irreparable harm. But you are not the principal in this matter, and I will not argue with you concerning my innocence, but only ask one favour in return for the possible wrong you do me. This is the privilege of a short interview with a person I am willing to name, and whom I only desire to see in your presence, and, if you wish, in your hearing."

"And may I inquire who this person is?" returned Mr. Gryce.

"A physician and a friend of mine; Dr. Walter Cameron, of No. —, Fifth Avenue.

No name could have awakened a greater surprise in Mr. Gryce's mind. Why, he could hardly have said. The two doctors were practitioners in the same school, and Dr. Cameron had owned to an acquaintance with Molesworth. Yet he was the last person Mr. Gryce had expected to hear mentioned in

this connection, and it seemed in some way to lend quite a new aspect to the affair.

"But Dr. Cameron is out of town; he has gone with his bride to Washington, and I do not think he has yet returned."

A shadow passed over the other's stern face.

"I must see him, nevertheless," he insisted. "You have not yet shown me your warrant. Consider me as a man under your surveillance merely, and go with me to Washington. You will not regret it." Then, seeming to recognize the unreasonableness of what he asked, he added, "You are following the commands of a superior; let me see him."

"You shall; but do you object to telling me what you want of Dr. Cameron?"

Julius Molesworth's face lighted up, a gleam flashed from that strange eye of his, and he looked almost handsome.

"I could not make you understand, but——Did you ever have any great ambition?" he suddenly asked, with rather a doubtful look at the elderly and somewhat benevolent countenance before him.

Mr. Gryce smiled.

"You may talk to me as if I had had," he rejoined.

"Listen, then. I am on the verge of attaining mine. I have a case, peculiar, striking in its complications, known to all the profession. It has hitherto baffled the skill of every man who has attempted to handle it; even Dr. ——'s interest was aroused and he gave it his best attention, but to no avail; and now I—*I* know that I have found the requisite remedy—discovered the necessary course of treatment. You will find it all on that paper. And with this prospect before me, this certainty I may say, you ask me what I want of Dr. Cameron, the ablest man I know among the rising practitioners of the day."

"I think I understand," said Mr. Gryce; "but put it into words. I want to know just what ground I am standing on."

"Well, then, if I must lose my liberty, this poor woman must not lose her life, nor science the prospect of a valuable discovery. Though I should have preferred to make my own experiments, I shall be at comparative ease if I can get some one upon whose judgment I can thoroughly rely to make them for me. But where is the man I can trust? I can think of

but one—Dr. Cameron. He has the ambition, and he has the great qualities of mind necessary to carry out the test I propose, in the face of all the opposition he will receive. To him, then, I wish to consign this case, and immediately. Have I made myself clear to you, and is there any hope of my wishes being complied with?"

Mr. Gryce closed the penknife whose sharp blade he had been considering through this long speech, and silently raised his head. The doctor surveyed him anxiously. What were his thoughts? His oldest friend and most trusted colleague could not have discovered.

"Are the suspicions against me too strong for this display of indulgence?" persisted the physician.

"We will go to the superintendent," decided Mr. Gryce.

Dr. Molesworth bowed his thanks, then made his final preparations for leaving. As they turned to quit the room he touched the detective on the shoulder.

"Are you at liberty to tell me upon what evidence I have been arrested?"

Mr. Gryce's mouth grew stern.

"That is the province of the district-attorney. I am an arm of the law, and not the mouth."

Dr. Molesworth said no more.

A carriage was at the door, and they rode to police headquarters. What passed there it is not necessary to relate. Enough that in half an hour they emerged, and getting again into the carriage, told the driver to take them to Jersey City.

The journey to Washington was decided upon.

As Mr. Gryce was buying the tickets, Dr. Molesworth whispered in his ear,—

"One other thing is requisite. We must surprise the doctor in his room. I am no favourite of his, and I doubt if he would listen to me if he had opportunity to escape my arguments. Promise me you will take him unawares—as you did me."

The detective pocketed his change, and turned; the prospect of travelling was evidently agreeable to him. He looked quite young.

"We will surprise him," he replied. "I have no wish to do anything else."

Did he anticipate making any discoveries in Washington?

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE HOTEL IN WASHINGTON.

THERE are dark pictures and there are bright ones. From the doctor's dull office let us pass to a sunny room in Washington, where, in the light of a declining sun, Dr. Cameron sits gazing with tender eyes upon his bride as she toys with a card of invitation which has just been handed in.

"You will have to answer it," she averred, closing the fingers of her right hand with a look of pain; "my rheumatism is no better."

"And what shall that answer be?" he inquired; "yes or no?"

For a moment she looked thoughtful; then she smiled.

"You enjoy these gaieties," she remarked; "let us make the most of them."

"And do not you enjoy them too?"

She sighed, drew herself up proudly, and replied,—

"I enjoy being with you anywhere, even in crowds."

He knew she did; he knew that, contrary to all his expectations, he had a loving wife, and his heart warmed within him.

"Genevieve," he remarked, "you are coming out from under the shadow. You look almost brilliant to-day."

"Do I?" her look seemed to say. And moved by that look as he never expected to be by that of any woman, he arose and drew her down by his side, where he could contemplate her beauty to his heart's content.

For Genevieve Cameron was beautiful, far beyond what Genevieve Gretorex had ever promised to be. Even a stranger must acknowledge this fact, and how much more the husband to whose love and devotion this pleasing change was undoubtedly due. Not only was her glance brighter and her smile more winning, but a physical change had taken place in her which altered her whole expression. He was thinking of this change now as he watched her colour come and go under his gaze. He was thinking of it and wondering at its

cause, as he had often done before since it was first revealed to him on the morning following his marriage. Though he showed no evidence of abstraction but continued his conversation with unabated animation, he was in reality living over the astonishment and perplexity of that extraordinary moment. Let me state what he recalled:—

The day was the one after his marriage and the time noon. He had just come in from a short walk. He had left his bride asleep on the lounge, worn out with the fatigues of their night journey and some trouble which he had not been able to fathom. He thought her still resting, so dark was the room and so void of any sound of welcome. But just as he was about to approach on tiptoe to the lounge where he had left her, he heard a low and smothered exclamation at his side, and turning, saw the figure of his wife bending towards the mirror that hung between the windows. She was looking at herself, and the weird reflection of her countenance stared wildly out upon him as her voice rose almost to a shriek, crying:

"Light, give me more light!"

Astonished and yet more troubled, for he had not forgotten the fainting-fit with which she had sealed the varied experiences of the night before, he rushed to the windows and hastily raised the shades. A low cry from his wife drew him back to her side.

"Look at me!" she exclaimed, with her two hands clasped over her face and her fingers buried deep in her hair.

"What is it?" he asked, and then gave utterance to an exclamation himself, for the head thus bowed in seeming shame before him was white as snow—white as a woman of ninety, whereas on yesterday it had been a glorious brown.

The exclamation made her drop her hands, and for a moment they stood looking wildly upon each other; then he said:

"Genevieve, you have had a terrible sorrow or some terrible pain, to produce such an effect as this. Which of the two is it, my poor darling? Speak, for I long to comfort you, whether it is grief or some fearful, unknown complaint."

Her answer had been a moan of joy, followed by a sudden burst of tears.

"Oh, I *have* suffered," she cried, "suffered fearfully. I never thought to get through these last few hours alive, but——" her hand, which she had held over her heart as if the pain were there, suddenly left it and flashed with a swift gesture towards the New York paper which he held in his hand.

"The *Herald!*" she cried, "let me see it; the notice of our marriage should be there." And with a laugh that was almost hysterical, she carried the paper with her towards the window, saying, "Anything to forget that pain. Frivolity, if frivolity can do it."

More and more troubled, for these actions were scarcely those of a sane woman, he watched her with darkness in his soul for a moment, and then seeing that her eye ran intelligently over the columns, he sank into a chair, questioning within himself as to what was to be his fate. The sweetest of sounds aroused him. Genevieve was at his feet, looking up into his face with a calm, almost an ecstatic, expression.

"Do I act wildly?" she murmured, her eyes gleaming with a natural light that yet looked very brilliant in contrast to the snowy locks which framed them on either side. "I think it is because my heart is so satisfied while my body is so racked with pain. But even that is better to-day; my hand is all that troubles me now. And she cast her eyes down when she again became conscious of her white locks.

"Good God!" she murmured below her breath, "how shall I account for these?"

The sweetness in her face had made him her ardent lover. Stooping, he took up a tress of this lightly flowing hair and softly kissed it. "You will not need to account for them," said he; "their beauty is their best excuse;" and lifting her to her feet he led her before the mirror and bade her look.

She did so, and almost started at the transformation she beheld. From being a woman of simply fine appearance and noble air, she had leaped, as it were, into magnificent beauty; the fair skin, the dark eyes, the white hair forming a combination that could never be passed again in street or parlour without leaving an impression behind of marvellous loveliness. She saw it and he saw it, and while neither spoke there was a subtle interchange of thought between them

which called out a wary dimple in her cheek which, to his eyes. finished the picture. He smiled over her shoulder, and in one breath both said,—

"My own mother would not know me."

"Your own mother would know you." At which simultaneous expression of the same idea he laughed and she coloured, but not with shame, rather with excessive pleasure.

"I am happy," she breathed; then lightly, and with simple mirth in her voice, "I cannot tell *her* that my excuse for aging thus suddenly is that my husband admires grey hairs."

"To her you can tell the truth. She must have known you were ill though you kept it from your physician and lover."

But Genevieve shook her head.

"No one knew," she answered. "I bore it as I will bear again if it comes."

"But it shall not come again. Your physician is now your husband, and you cannot deceive him." And he began to ask her questions about her health which she at first attempted to answer and then parried, saying at last,—

"The pain is gone now, Walter; let us not bother about it but be happy." Then with an arch smile, all light, all joy, "Are you sure you like me better so? Will you not regret my brown locks after the first surprise is gone by?"

The answer was decisive.

"Never!" said he, and drawing her passionately to his breast, he whispered, "Admiration has grown into passion, Genevieve. I love you, not with calmness, propriety and discretion, but madly, as the first man loved the first woman before ever the serpent crept into paradise."

"And all because of my white hairs! I will be worthy of this crown," she exclaimed; and with a step that scarcely seemed to touch the ground, she glided from him and disappeared in the little room beyond.

And Walter Cameron, who had not wished to love more than was compatible with an undivided attention to his profession, found himself absolutely dazzled.

He was thinking of all this as I have said, and wondering over it while talking to her about her dress, which on that day was especially picturesque and becoming. Nor did his thoughts stop at this point, but, by some strange freak of

mental activity, ran on through the various experiences of the days which had intervened between that time and this. He saw more plainly than he did the face before him, the looks of admiration which her appearance excited the first time he took her into a public assemblage; and remembered, with quite a startling distinctness, the expression of astonishment which crossed the features of a New York friend upon meeting one whom he had known so well, thus changed and beautified. It was an earnest of what lay before them on their return to the metropolis; and Dr. Cameron recalled, with feelings of delight, her attitude of proud unconsciousness, followed by the smile of gracious and indulgent greeting with which she hailed a homage which she could not but perceive. Then those petty memories of her various freaks and fancies, which at times marred the effect of her presence, and at other times heightened it—why should he recall them now when he had these deep inquiring eyes before him and these dimpling cheeks which were beginning to show such bloom and brightness! He felt annoyed at himself, and yet his thoughts ran on, counting up the hours when she had seemed lost in abstraction, and the moments when she had been found lacking in words for those they knew best, or, what was worse, uttered incongruities calculated to awaken surprise and possibly dismay in the hearts of those who heard her. Why, it was only yesterday she committed a breach of etiquette which argued a mind so far away from the scene in which they were taking rather a conspicuous part, that it needed all his love and indulgence to prevent him from betraying the shame which such culpable indifference to what was required of her as a guest aroused. And yet when recalled to her duty by a word, how graciously she had lent herself to the reparation of her fault, and how earnest had been the look with which she had studied his face to see how deep her offence had gone. 'Twas a mysterious nature moved by mysterious moods, and though she betrayed at times certain little awkwardnesses of manner strangely in contrast with the somewhat stately character of her beauty, there was also visible in her air and bearing the suggestion of great inner forces which lent to her least look and action the fascination of the indefinable and unexpected. And yet with all this charm and gaiety, all was not well with her. There was some-

thing hidden in his paradise which if once discerned he felt would banish sleep from his eyes. But he did not dare to question what it was, any more than he dared to question whether the illness of which she complained had been the real secret of the extraordinary change which had taken place in her, or not. That with all these doubts his paradise was a fool's paradise he could not gainsay. But if this was so, he was but living over the experience of many a greater man before him, and her secret, if secret she had, was not a dishonouring one, or her eyes could never lift themselves to his with such purity of devotion as he now saw in them.

Arrived at this point in his meditations, he paused in surprise that he was not satisfied with this look. Surely its language was unmistakable. Why make himself miserable when he had ocular proofs of her womanliness and devotion in every glance she gave him! He would do it no more; he would drop the past from his thoughts and abandon himself solely to the present. Intent upon this resolve, he exclaimed suddenly:

"I must show you to my friends. When shall we go back to New York?"

A shadow fell upon the brightness of her face. "Oh, must we go back?" she cried. "I wish we could live here always." Then, observing his astonishment, she added, "I hate New York; I should be glad if we never had to see it again. There I shall have only a part of you, here I have the whole."

What could any man but two weeks married say in answer? He stooped over her and gave her a kiss, and then with that strange sensation we sometimes have of an intruding presence, he lifted his head and was startled to perceive a dark figure gazing on him from the doorway, whose countenance he did not at once recognize, so great was his anger and chagrin.

"Who are you?" he cried, leaping to his feet. "I thought our door was shut——" But here the figure stepping forward, he beheld a face he knew, but little expected to see in this spot, and, greatly astonished, he paused and waited, while the other, advancing still further, said:

"Your pardon. We understood from the hall-boy that this was a public reception-room." And with this Dr. Cameron became aware that a second intruder had entered and was

standing behind the first comer. The face was unknown to him, nor did he look at it twice, his attention being directed towards Dr. Molesworth, who was saying:

"I have some business with you, Dr. Cameron. May I venture to tell you what it is?"

"Business with me?"

"Yes, sir."

The answer was brief and slightly abstracted, for his gaze had fallen on Mrs. Cameron, and he evidently felt that surprise and involuntary admiration which every stranger now experienced in seeing her for the first time.

"My wife!" was Dr. Cameron's cold introduction. Both gentlemen bowed and Genevieve rose. A flush of indignation was on her brow and she looked almost threatening. But she contented herself with a short bow, so icy and repellent, that Dr. Molesworth dropped his eyes, and from that moment forward ignored her very presence.

It was not so with his companion. Either her beauty or the surprising change which had taken place in her appearance fascinated him, for his gaze never left her vicinity after her first introduction to him. Yet he seemed to lose nothing of what was said, though he kept himself as much in the background as possible.

"I will not detain you long," were the words with which Dr. Molesworth introduced his subject. "That my business is important I leave you to infer from the fact that I have journeyed all the way from New York to see you."

Dr. Cameron's courtesy had by this time returned. He pushed forward a chair and invited his visitor to sit down.

"I shall be happy to hear," said he, and lent his full attention, while Genevieve, turning with chill dignity, withdrew into a window recess near by.

"I am Julius Molesworth. If you do not remember me as your former class-mate and fellow-practitioner, you probably will as one of the leading witnesses in an inquest which has aroused considerable attention of late."

Dr. Cameron's countenance changed. For reasons that we know he had taken a great interest in this inquest, though he had said nothing about it to his wife.

"Pardon me," he replied, "I do recollect. I read of the death of your affianced wife with the utmost sympathy; for——"

Here, by some attraction he could not understand, his gaze wandered from the man before him to the person who had accompanied him into the room, and the consequence was that the words faltered on his tongue and he grew strangely embarrassed. For in the large form of this man and the disguised but not wholly unfamiliar countenance he thought he saw again that mysterious being under whose influence he had consented to act as a spy upon the privacy of Mildred Farley on that memorable evening of his marriage, and this being held up a warning finger and glanced with pointed consideration at his wife.

"For she died upon the same night that you were married," broke in Dr. Molesworth, completing the other's sentence.

Dr. Cameron bowed. He knew now why the detective, if it were the detective, had stopped him. It would be anything but pleasant to Genevieve to hear of the extraordinary likeness between herself and this poor suicide ; a likeness, moreover, which had evidently well nigh vanished in the change which had taken place in Mrs. Cameron, or Dr. Molesworth would have been struck by it, and he manifestly was not.

"It is of Miss Farley and her unaccountable death that I have first to speak," continued the intruder, calmly. "If you have read the proceedings, you know what the verdict was and what general credence was given me at the inquest. You will therefore be surprised to hear that for some reason unknown to me, the police authorities have seen fit to discredit the evidence given by me at that time, and that I stand before you now in the character of an accused man, with the prospect of arrest before me."

"I—am sure——" Dr. Cameron stammered, glancing with some embarrassment at the tall and immovable figure of his wife, outlined against the faint yellow of the evening sky.

"Do not think you must express surprise or sympathy," interpolated Dr. Molesworth, coldly ; "I am innocent. But," he continued with less dignity but more fervour, "that has nothing to do with the fact that my prospects are ruined by this suspicion and my career at an end. Whether I am committed to trial or not, my name must suffer and my practice receive a shock from which it will be long in recovering. It

is a great misfortune to me, I acknowledge, but you may make it a less serious one if 'you will.'"

"I?"

Why did Dr. Cameron look again at his wife? Why did the expression of Mr. Gryce, who was always looking at her, change and deepen indefinably? She had not moved. Her two arms, stretched out and grasping the curtains on each side of her, had the firmness of steel, and in her proud head held erect in the fixed attention she was seemingly giving to the outer world, no sign appeared of her having heard a word of what went on behind her in the room in which she stood. Yet her husband felt a strange chill as he noted her attitude, and thought of a cross outlined against a darkening sky. While Mr. Gryce, whose mind we have less skill in penetrating when he drops his eyebrows as now over his eyes, could have received anything but a cheerful impression from this figure of grace and beauty, or why the sudden rigidity in his own form, that but a moment before looked so comfortable and at ease? Dr. Molesworth alone remained unchanged.

"It is a conundrum which I have propounded to you," he observed, in calm allusion to what he had before said. "As you seem to possess no key to it—" he paused, and one would have said he held his breath for a moment—"I shall have to produce my own. I——" he paused. "Did your wife speak?" he suddenly asked, rising with every appearance of respect.

"I think not," returned the other, somewhat haughtily.

Dr. Molesworth bowed and again sat down. "Excuse me," he cried, and Dr. Cameron was sure he heard him sigh; "I would not wish to weary the lady." Then, with recurrence to his business-like tones, "I asserted that you could help me. It was not lightly said, for you are a bold man and an ambitious one. If a complicated and dangerous case were given you that demanded unusual measures, you would take them, I am sure. If that case belonged to another man and he were sick or disabled from attending to his duties, you would listen to his diagnosis and make yourself acquainted with his theory of cure, and if it met with your approval, accept it as your own and treat that case with all the interest and attention which you would have bestowed upon it if the method of treatment had been your own."

"I think so," returned the other, simply.

"Well, such a case I have," proceeded Dr. Molesworth, with steady impressiveness. "The patient is Bridget Harrigan; you have doubtless heard of her, and she has been given up by Drs. S—— and B——. But I am certain that she can be cured. That this line of treatment——" He looked towards the detective, who thereupon handed him a slip of paper, "will prove startlingly efficacious, and give to the man, bold and determined enough to use it, an enviable notoriety."

"Let me see," exclaimed the other, his professional interest aroused in spite of himself.

The paper was handed him, and the doctors' two heads, so dissimilar in appearance and yet so like in their expression of intellectual superiority, came together over it.

The consultation which followed will not interest the reader. It was purely professional and had enough technical terms in it to awe me from any attempt to reproduce it. Enough that, as they proceeded, Dr. Cameron's look of reserve and possible prejudice gave way to one of undisguised admiration, and he asked, without any tone of envy in his voice:

"How did you come by this, Molesworth? It has the appearance of a positive discovery to me."

"I got it by hard thought," was the other's reply. "I get nothing by intuition, as you do."

"So much the more credit to you," observed Dr. Cameron, folding up the paper and putting it in his pocket.

"And you will take this case?"

"On the condition that if successful the entire credit shall be yours."

A look hard to fathom flashed in the dark eye of Julius Molesworth for an instant. It seemed as if he longed to hold out his hand, but he did not do it, and an instant's silence fell upon the group.

"There seems to be no further reason for our remaining here," Dr. Molesworth at length observed. "I have finished my business, and," turning towards the detective, "am now at your service." And yet he seemed in no hurry to go.

As for Mr. Gryce, he showed no signs of having heard the doctor. His glance had fallen upon a strip of passementerie on Mrs. Cameron's silken skirts. From his puckered brows it looked as though he were studying a problem.

"I hope you will be able to follow out your experiment yourself, before many days," courteously remarked Dr. Cameron. "This—this committal of which you speak cannot last long. All will be cleared up before the Grand Jury, or I am very much mistaken in the man whose ideas I have just been forced to adopt."

His visitor bowed but shook his head. "I never borrow anything from hope," said he; and having risen to his feet by this time, he made a profound obeisance towards the immovable figure at the window, and turned to leave the room.

The detective tore his gaze from the strip of passementerie which had so engaged his attention and followed him. The stern and solemn picture which they both carried away with them was that of a woman's tall and rigid form stretched, as it were, on a cross against a sky, down which were slowly fluttering the first flakes of a coming snow-storm.

CHAPTER XII.

CURIOSITY OR INTEREST?

THAT evening there was a great ball at Washington, and the woman who shone the most resplendent and received the most homage was our young bride, Genevieve Cameron. Even her husband, who had begun to expect everything from her, was amazed. Words, in which she was sometimes lacking, came freely from her lips, and the wit which in her case took the place of knowledge, glittered in all she said with just enough keenness to fascinate. Her white hair made her conspicuous, and her beaming eyes and dimpling mouth, amid whose smiles just the hint of smothered feeling showed itself at times, caused the gaze which fell upon her to linger till Dr. Cameron experienced a touch of happy jealousy, and laughingly whispered in her ear,—

"It is fortunate this is our last ball here, or I should soon be ordering coffee and pistols for myself and some of these fierce-looking ambassadors."

She shuddered, but nevertheless forced a smile, and in a few minutes was more sparkling than ever. If it were their last ball she would enjoy it to the utmost: and it certainly promised to be, as they were going home on the morrow.

This change in their programme had been occasioned by the promise which Dr. Cameron had given to Dr. Molesworth. No demur had been made by Genevieve, and their arrangements were all made for leaving. That she could dance away the last hours of her happy stay in this city of all cities, seemed a delight to her, though I should rather say, talk away, for she talked more than she danced, possibly because Dr. Cameron had once said that he did not especially enjoy seeing his wife in the arms of another man, while as for square dances she detested them, and always had.

Her dress was white—the one in which she had been married—and amongst its other claims to admiration was a peculiarly graceful arrangement of drapery on the left side. This was the reason, perhaps, why Mrs. General F—— approached her in the dressing-room, and, after looking at her with the greatest delight for a moment, exclaimed rapturously,—

"I never did see any one with such costumes as you wear. Who is your *modiste?* Tell me, that is a good girl."

The lady was elderly, and her manner was caressing rather than impertinent, but Mrs. Cameron was much displeased, and showed it by the angry flush that crimsoned her brow and neck. Her words nevertheless were gracious, though she did not answer the other's question.

"I am really much obliged to you for your appreciation," she cried; "but I really cannot give such a weighty secret away so lightly. I have gnomes and fairies to do my work, and have sworn never to reveal their whereabouts."

It was a trifling incident—almost too trifling to record—but it wearied her, and it was not long before she testified her wish to return home. In the early morning they started for New York.

When about half way to Philadelphia, Mrs. Cameron leaned forward and touched her husband.

"When persons are situated like that Dr.—Dr. Molesworth who came to see us yesterday, do they go to prison?" she asked.

Glad to hear her allude to a matter which had aroused his own interest extremely, he turned and gave her as lucid an explanation of the subject as circumstances would allow. She did not appear much interested, but when he finished she sighed, and remarked,—

"He did not look like a guilty man; did you think so? I feel very sorry for him." And she sank back into her seat with a weary air. She did not speak of the subject again for days.

It had been Dr. Cameron's intention to carry his wife directly to the home he had prepared for her. But their unexpected return made this unadvisable, and he accordingly took her to St. Nicholas Place. She had not wished to go there, but she did not know how to make objection, so she said nothing, and by six o'clock of that same day she found herself in her mother's arms.

"My dearest!" was that mother's graceful salutation as she turned her cold cheek formally to her daughter's lips. "What a delightful surprise! And your father,—how pleased he will be! But what an undutiful child you have been not to write to me! I don't believe a word about the rheumatism, which Dr. Cameron says is your sole excuse. You never had the rheumatism before you were married. You have simply been lazy, or anxious to show your power over your good husband. He has written quite regularly, good-for-nothing girl that you are!"

And Mrs. Gretorex, whom this happy event seemed to have made ten years younger, drew back and looked at her daughter with sudden and somewhat vivid curiosity.

"Why do you keep on your veil?" she asked. "Come into the parlour and let me have a look at you, and see what Dr. Cameron means when he says you have lost your beautiful brown locks." They were standing in the hall, down whose broad and inviting sweep Genevieve was secretly casting shy and fearful glances. "For hair to turn at your age, and so suddenly, is incredible. You must have had a very unhappy honeymoon." And with a laugh, startlingly gay and unrestrained for this model of lady-like composure and elegance, Mrs. Gretorex led the way into the parlour, where she speedily busied herself with untying her daughter's veil.

"Prepare to be surprised," cried Dr. Cameron, as it came

away in the mother's hand and revealed Genevieve's countenance.

An exclamation from Mrs. Gretorex answered him.

"Why, she is beautiful! A piece of coquetry, my child! You knew it only needed this to make you irresistible. Another kiss, Genevieve," continued the gratified mother, turning her cheek for the second time. "I must call your father, I must indeed." And she hastened away towards the library, while Genevieve fell back into a chair, with an air of proud relief that her husband thought eminently becoming.

The evening thus agreeably inaugurated, was not without its hints of unpleasantness, however. In the first place, Mrs. Gretorex, though delighted with her daughter's bearing and appearance, was not altogether satisfied with her manner. Genevieve did not talk enough, and when she did enter into the conversation, it was upon other topics than those chosen by the mother. Then she did not show that interest in domestic affairs which the occasion seemed to require; never asking once about certain changes in servants which Mrs. Gretorex considered of infinite importance. Nor did she show herself concerned when the mother announced that Clara Foote was on her way home, deprecating, indeed, every allusion to this person, who had formerly been and still held the title of being her most intimate friend. Mrs. Gretorex not understanding this, and becoming gradually irritated by an apathy so unnatural, finally asked her daughter what it meant. Whereupon Genevieve replied, with some spirit, that she had heard some things said about Clara of late which had turned her completely against her, and that she no longer regarded her as her friend, or ever should again. This was unpleasant in the extreme, particularly as she would not explain herself or hear the subject argued. She and Clara were alienated, and that was enough; she was not even sure she should accept the present that young lady had sent her. But the climax was reached when Mrs. Gretorex, in the most natural tone in the world, asked Genevieve to go upstairs with her to the room she had occupied as a girl.

"I want you to tell me what to do with certain articles," she explained. "Everything is just as you left it," said she. "I would not have anything touched."

"You are very good," replied Genevieve, coldly, "but

you must excuse me from going into such matters to-night."

"But——" began the mother.

"I am too tired, and I don't feel like it. Some other day, when I have not just come from a long railway journey."

Mrs. Gretorex was displeased; her wishes had hitherto been law in this house. Genevieve saw it, and turned quite a penitent glance in her direction.

"I am sorry to disoblige you," said she, her mouth taking that expression of rare sweetness which gave to her very caprices a certain attractive charm. "But the fact is, the doctor has almost spoiled me. He has humoured my whims more than he must do in the future, or I shall grow into a very selfish wretch. Do you hear, Walter?"

Walter did hear, but he thought it best to seem buried in conversation with his father-in-law; while Mrs. Gretorex, appeased in a measure, smiled with less bitterness, and asked some question in relation to the etiquette of the White House. The family harmony was seemingly restored, but Mrs. Cameron did not go upstairs.

The result of all this was that she asked her husband the first thing in the morning, if their own home could not be got ready for them that day, and upon his deciding that it could at least be made habitable, she announced it as her intention to remove immediately. And she did so, carrying out her determination not ungraciously but firmly, accepting inconveniences and parrying objections, till Dr. Cameron felt very much flattered at her evident preference for his sole and undivided society. And so it was that Genevieve Cameron, the wife, cut the strings which bound her to Genevieve Gretorex, the girl.

It was the second morning of their new life in their new home that Dr. Cameron surprised his wife searching the columns of the morning paper with great eagerness. Her face wore an anxious look, and her hands trembled nervously.

"What is it?" he asked. "You seem to be looking for something especial, Genevieve."

She at once dropped the paper.

"Oh, no," was her nonchalant reply. "I was only whiling away a spare moment or so. Is it time for you to go out?"

It was, but he lingered a moment.

"I wish I understood you," said he.

"Understood me?"

"There are moments when you seem miles away from me."

"Oh, no! oh, no!"

"Not this moment," he whispered, for she had thrown her two arms about his neck, and hidden her face on his breast.

"At no moment," she breathed. "You are too strong a man to cherish fancies."

He thought so too, and laughed; he was so freshly alive to love that it made him hyper-sensitive.

"You would make any man think black is white," he cried.

"I am afraid I should have difficulty in persuading even this man that white is black," she laughed, touching her hair with her jewelled finger.

"I don't know," he murmured; "you have not tried." And so their parting was pleasant.

Next morning she was first at the paper again, and this time she explained herself.

"I do not see any notice of Dr. Molesworth's arrest. Should it not be in the papers?"

"Certainly, and I have been wondering about it myself. They can give me no news of him at the hospital, and the case he spoke of has become mine; but there is no talk anywhere of his being in custody or even under the surveillance of the police. I think I will hunt him up at his home."

"It would be kind in you," quoth Genevieve.

And thus it was that Dr. Cameron rang Mrs. Olney's bell one morning, and being ushered in, asked for Dr. Molesworth. He was told he was not well, but saw a few patients, and perhaps would see him; whereupon Dr. Cameron sent in his name and waited with considerable curiosity for the response.

It came speedily, and was to the effect that the doctor would be pleased if he would step to his office. Dr. Cameron at once complied, and upon entering that bare and unattractive spot, saw first the figure of his colleague stretched upon a long hair-cloth sofa, and next that of a small and insignifi-

cant looking-man, who with his face bent over a cheap novel which he held in his hand, seemed to take up a certain amount of space rather than add his personality to the scene.

"I am glad," began Dr. Molesworth, springing to his feet as the door closed behind the servant, "for an opportunity to ask you how our patient is getting on."

"Well," returned the other; "considering that the nurse shakes her head over every drop of medicine she gives her."

"You will have that nurse removed; the case must not suffer from any such nonsense as that."

Dr. Cameron nodded and looked curiously at his companion.

"You are ill, they say?"

A grim smile disturbed the corners of the other's lips for a moment.

"I have a nurse you see."

Dr. Cameron cast a glance at the silent figure of the man in the corner.

"I understand," his intelligent look seemed to say. Then with quiet solicitude, "And how soon do you think you will be better?"

Dr. Molesworth shook his head. "As I have not yet made a satisfactory diagnosis of my case, I will not venture to prophesy."

"Do you want a prescription?"

"No."

"Do you want anything?"

"Not from you."

It was gently said. Dr. Cameron looked at the speaker with renewed interest.

"I was uneasy about you," was his earnest remark; "so was my wife. I am glad to find you comparatively comfortable."

"Mrs. Cameron is very good." Dr. Molesworth's bow was profound, his tone very serious.

Dr. Cameron moved towards the door.

"I judge," exclaimed the other, with an aspect of much respect, "that the evening which brought me such misfortune, brought you the happiness of your life?"

The light in his visitor's eyes was unmistakable.

"You have said it," he assented.

Dr. Molesworth's lips parted in a smile, that touched the other strangely.

"I congratulate you," said he, and softly closed the door between them.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRIVIALITIES.

Dr. Cameron met his wife at a restaurant that afternoon, and they went home together. He had told her of his interview with Molesworth, and she had uttered a polite word or two of thanks, but her interest was evidently less than in the morning, and he did not strive to increase it. Her gaiety was too agreeable for him to mar it. He basked in her smiles, and lent himself unreservedly to the pleasure of the moment. At the door of their own house they looked at each other and smiled.

"It is pleasant to get home," he cried.

"It is heaven," she faintly murmured.

The house was not large, but it was exquisitely furnished. As they entered, an atmosphere of ease and luxury enveloped them, making it hard for them to part at the foot of the stairs.

"Come up," entreated Genevieve. And he went, excusing himself for this open disregard of certain duties awaiting him, by the plea that there was so much to talk about when people were settling themselves in a new home.

And so it happened that he was standing by her boudoir fire when Genevieve entered her dressing-room to take off her hat; and the two rooms being contiguous, he plainly heard the cry of astonishment she uttered as she beheld lying out before her on the bed her whole assortment of dresses.

"What is it?" he asked, hurrying to her side.

"Oh nothing, I suppose. I was surprised at this display of silk and velvet, and I can't imagine now what it means."

"We will soon find out," he rejoined, and turned to ring the bell.

But at this instant the young girl whom they had temporarily engaged for upstairs work, came into the room wearing an anxious and somewhat troubled expression.

"Did you call, ma'am?" she asked, watching with concern how her mistress's eye fell on her outspread dresses.

"No, but I should have done so in a moment. Why are these things lying here? I left them carefully hung up in closets or laid away on shelves. Who has presumed in my absence to take them down?"

"I am sure, ma'am," began the girl, tremblingly, "I thought you ordered it. The young woman seemed very sure of herself, and told me just what dress you wanted fixed, only I couldn't find it."

"Young woman? What young woman?"

"Why, the one from the dressmaker's, ma'am. She told me you had sent for her; that one of your dresses, a blue silk, she said, was too long in the skirt, and that she had come to fix it. She had her needle and thread with her, ma'am, and looked very respectable. But I couldn't find the blue silk, and she went away."

"I sent for no girl from any dressmaker, and you did very wrong to touch my dresses without my express order. It is lucky she did not walk away with one."

"Oh, ma'am," the girl exclaimed, "she was very respectable, and said herself there must be some mistake. You can see her, ma'am, if you wish; she will tell you it is just as I say."

Mrs. Cameron's lips opened, but her husband's voice forestalled her.

"She left her name, then, and told you the place where she works?"

"No, sir. But as she came from the dressmaker who made the dresses; Mrs. Cameron will know——"

"What are you talking about?" that lady broke in, angrily. "How do you know she came from the dressmaker who makes my dresses?"

"Why, ma'am," was the reply, "I couldn't help it. She had bits and pieces of them all in her hand, and compared them on the sly. She did not know as I saw her, but I did, and that was the one thing I didn't like about her. For what business had she with any but the blue silk she was sent to fix?"

Dr. Cameron smiled and stepped back into the boudoir. After all it was a trifling matter which his wife could easily settle. He did not perceive that she had grown startlingly white about the lips, and could hardly speak the words which the occasion demanded.

"She had pieces like these dresses?" she repeated. "Like how many of them, and like which ones? Tell me at once."

The girl, more and more troubled, shook her head.

"There was a bit like this one," she returned, pointing to a superb dinner-dress of grey velvet; "and a piece of trimming such as is on that one," indicating this time a lovely tea gown of light brown silk. "And I saw her look very particularly at the white dress, ma'am, and at the buttons on this coat. But them girls all do those things, and I'm sure she took nothing away."

Mrs. Cameron sank into a chair, looked at the luxurious garments in which she had shone like a bright particular star in Washington, and seemed to be seized with sudden distaste for them.

"Hang them up," she cried, "and whatever happens, don't take them down from their pegs again unless I tell you." Then as the girl moved to do her bidding, she asked again, with a sharp tone in her voice, "Are you sure the pieces you saw were exactly like the dresses she compared them with?"

"Sure, ma'am," was the emphatic reply. "I was quite near, and I couldn't have told the two apart in no case."

Genevieve sighed, took off her wraps, and advanced to the boudoir. "I am in a dream" was what her looks seemed to say; but if this was so, the dream must have been dispelled at the threshold, for it was a brilliant, talkative, and merrily smiling woman that stepped into the other room, and with a glance dispelled the frown of thought that had settled upon her waiting husband's brow.

The mystery of this occurrence, so petty and yet so unexplainable, was followed up by one not so petty and yet fully as hard to understand. A gentleman called—that very evening, I think—and affixed to his name on the card were the words, *Pressing business.*

They both saw him, he having sent for both, and after a word or two of introduction, he told his errand in this wise:—

"I have come," said he, "to ask Mrs. Cameron a very simple question." And turning to that lady, he inquired the name of her dressmaker.

Had the ceiling above her suddenly bent and caved in, Genevieve could not have looked more astonished and possibly not more terrified.

"Your pardon," this gentleman continued. "I am abrupt and you probably think, rude. Let me explain myself. Dr Cameron, you, if not your wife, doubtless remember the affair of a young girl who died in a doctor's gig not long ago from a dose of prussic acid?"

It was now Dr. Cameron who looked amazed. "Mildred Farley?" he inquired, wondering why this name was ever springing up at his hearthstone.

"The same," rejoined the other.

"Yes," assented the doctor, with a glance at his wife, which she did not meet, so absorbed was she in the flames of the dancing firelight before her; "I remember the occurrence well; it was not only sad but mysterious. Can the question you have put my wife have any bearing upon this tragic affair?"

"Some," responded the other, looking however with a most paternal smile upon the still and stately woman who, evidently waiting for him to make his business more intelligible, listened, but said nothing to his enigmatical remark.

"Mildred Farley was a dressmaker," this gentleman went on. "If you read the newspapers you know this, and also know that she worked hard at her duties for some weeks before her death. But what is very strange in her connection, and, together with some other reasons unnecessary to state here makes it difficult for the police to settle down to the belief that her death was the simple suicide it at first seemed, is that no one has succeeded in discovering for whom she worked, and to what home she carried the various dresses she finished in that time. For though it may not be material to know this, and may not help the affair forward one jot towards its rightful issue, yet because it is a mystery and an unsolved one, those whose business it is to see every doubtful case made clear, have sent me to this house to see if some light cannot be thrown by you upon it."

He paused and looked at Genevieve. She at once raised her eyes and surveyed him steadily.

"You think then, that I knew Mildred Farley?" was her question, clearly and coldly uttered.

"Did you not?" he inquired.

Her lips broke into a smile. "Ask Dr. Cameron," she suggested, and seemed to think she had answered his question.

Their visitor glanced at the doctor, met only a dubious shake of the head, and continued in a more formal tone,—

"If you did not know Miss Farley, it is strange she should have made the dresses of your trousseau, Mrs. Cameron."

"I don't understand you," was that lady's reply. "My dresses were made by anyone but that girl. This I can assure you most positively, sir."

"You can. We are then brought round to my first question: Who was it that did make your dresses, Mrs Cameron?"

It was smilingly said but it caused her to flush with great indignation.

"Is it necessary that I should tell you?" she somewhat haughtily inquired.

"If you do not, I cannot prevent certain people I know from thinking it was Mildred Farley."

"And why?" Dr. Cameron now broke in. "What reasons have they or anyone to connect my wife with that poor unfortunate?"

"Only a very material one which I leave to Mrs. Cameron to explain. In the room of that dead girl were found scraps and ends of silk and velvet, which were preserved by the police as pieces of the goods she had been lately making up into dresses. Among these was a morsel of trimming—here it is—and as this trimming or some just like it, was seen by chance upon a dress worn by Mrs. Cameron, it struck one of our agents that she was in all probability the lady who had profited by this poor girl's handiwork."

"The conclusion of a man!" exclaimed Mrs. Cameron, with chill sarcasm. "I suppose there are in this city to-day, twenty ladies with just that trimming on their gowns."

"And with this grey velvet for a dress? And this—I do not know how to call it—for another? And this soft white silk so suitable for a bride's adorning, and——"

"Enough, enough," cried Mrs. Cameron, putting up her

hands merrily as half-a-dozen samples of various goods and colours fell in a shower into her lap. "I own to these, but I do not own to Mildred Farley. I know the trick that was played upon me to-day, and I am sure I thank you gentlemen heartily; but you waste your time; you will never find that she did any sewing for me, however she came into possession of these pieces." And with a half careless, half disdainful smile, she flirted the bits aside, looking so imperious and so charming, that for a moment her visitor seemed a trifle abashed and half rose as if to go. "You see if I had anything to tell, I would," she murmured, graciously. "But I have not. I cannot explain any more than you how these samples from my dresses should have been found where they were. I can only look at them and wonder: Is that enough, sir?"

"Hardly," his look seemed to say, but he rose. "And you will not tell me where your dresses were made?" he smiled.

She shook her head, laughed, and rose with an arch air.

"It is a secret I have kept even from my husband, but if you must have it, you must." And rising on tiptoe, with a look of merry defiance at the doctor, she whispered something in the visitor's ear.

He listened, stared at her a moment, and broke into a genial laugh.

"And so this is your secret," he cried. "Well, I know how to respect the secrets of a lady when such respect does not interfere with my duty."

And with a gallant bow he took his leave, expressing the hope that he had not made his call too lengthy.

After he was gone, Dr. Cameron turned to his wife.

"And what did you whisper in that big man's ear to calm him so suddenly?"

"Ah, you want to know my secret too," she laughed. "Well, I told him that the work which has been so much admired had been done by no woman. That in my vanity and desire for originality I had had the poor taste to employ a man, and that I was secretly ashamed of it."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BACK PORCH.

"SHE told you that?" cried Mr. Gryce. "And you believed her? Humph!"

"She spoke the truth," asserted his companion—the gentleman whose name we purposely suppressed in the last chapter.

"You think so?"

"I do. There was something in her tone, whisper though it was, which brought conviction. I do not question her word in the least."

"Well, we will see; I did not hear her, and so may be pardoned for having my doubts. I will talk with you again, sir. The play may not be worth the candle, and it may; a few days more will determine."

"And Molesworth?"

"Is very well as he is."

This conversation, fragmentary though it is, will show something of the stand which Mr. Gryce was taking in this matter. He had Molesworth under his eye and as good as under arrest, and yet he was not satisfied. Something—was it instinct or experience—told him that this affair possessed complications of no ordinary nature, and that to a conscientious man like himself there were doubts to be solved and possibilities to be sounded before he would dare proceed against the doctor as against a presumably guilty man.

The direction which these doubts took was certainly a startling one. He owned this much to himself, and questioned more than once his own sanity in thus connecting, however remotely, a woman of Genevieve's character and position with the tragic death of a poor working girl. But the suspicion once entertained would not vanish at his bidding; and when he found that the great lady stooped to lie about so small a matter as to the person who had made her gowns (for he gave no credit to the whispered assertion she had made in his superior's ear), he was confident that he was more

sane than he had sometimes feared, and that the clue he had stumbled upon was worth following, even if there was as yet but little sign of light ahead.

He was influenced, perhaps, in these conclusions by certain recollections which now recurred to him. In his interview with Celia previous to the return of Miss Gretorex to her home, there had been much talk—trivial talk he had then thought it—about a girl who brought home her young mistress' dresses.

"A proud, disdainful person," this Celia had declared in her broken English, "who thought herself too good to show her face to common people, for none of us ever saw her without a veil, and she never spoke. But we tried to make her when we met her in the hall or on the stairs. She carried a big box, and when I saw it or her I got so angry I could only just keep my tongue still and no more. But Miss Gretorex told me to let her in whenever she came, and not to make trouble with her. So I was afraid to treat her as she deserved. But if I knew then that I was to go without notice after all——" And so on till even the patient detective had grown weary over what appeared to be such a foolish waste of words and time.

But, with the kindred remembrance of what the woman in Mrs. Olney's boarding-house had said about Mildred Farley's frequent comings and goings with her great box, he did not consider it so foolish now, and only wished he had probed the subject deeper at the time. It was not so late yet, however, but that proper inquiries in the right places would settle the question as to whether these two girls were the same. He had only to pass a word or two with the complaisant butler at Mr. Gretorex's house, to learn enough to have the laugh, to say the least, on his somewhat credulous superior. To Mr. Gretorex's house he therefore went, and to Mr. Gretorex's butler he at once addressed himself.

He found this person quite ready to talk in his easy, French way.

"Zat girl? I—none of ze help know somezling 'bout zat girl, only Mees Gretorex always was at home when she come. A veil for ze face? *Oui*, so zick you no can see if she was black or white. But she was ver pretty—look good, *Sacré!* She walk good—proud like a comtesse. She no look at me. One

time Pierre try, I try to speak wiz her. It was no good. If she was much deaf she do just so; for she look not to me, she look not to Pierre."

"You're right, count," laughed a voice over their shoulders, "and one of us ain't a bad-looking man aither."

It was Peter, who liked a bit of gossip as well as his neighbour, and who now came forward smiling.

"I feel ze compliment, M. Pierre; and it is ver much good for you to say so," retorted the "Count," with a grandiose bow. "It is ze opinion of ze ladies in ze house."

The butler then winked slyly at Gryce, and, satisfied that he had effectually discomforted the footman, proceeded to put questions to the detective as to his reasons for the interest he showed in this girl, which that functionary had wit and experience enough to successfully parry.

Peter helped him; for Peter was a rival of the butler's in more than one field, and in his good-natured way invariably took part against him in any controversy; and it was from Peter that Mr. Gryce finally got the acknowledgment that this young woman, or lady, as he persisted in calling her, usually wore a long, black ulster, and made her appearance in the evening.

Now this was satisfactory. In the closet of Mildred Farley at Mrs. Olney's house there was a long, black ulster, and she, as we know, was accustomed to take her work home evenings.

"But she didn't have the ulster on the last time she came, oh no," continued Peter. "I don't know what it was made the difference, but she looked foine. Oh, now! well I'm tellin' ye I wouldn't have known her at all, at all, but for her ould brown veil and little hand-bag. Them wur the same as before, and so was the air of her. Not a word nor the devil of a look for one of us; but, being the night o' the wedding, she got out o' me head, for sure I had enough else to moind."

It was a surprise, but Mr. Gryce was accustomed to surprises, so he kept quite still; the more so that he saw the butler was about to speak, and he always preferred to glean his facts through the questions of other people rather than his own.

"Zat girl here on Miss Gretorex's wedding night? I zink you was mistake, Pierre."

"Mistaken is it I am! when these two hands let her in

meself at the back door. It wasn't only here she was, but it's helpin' Miss Gretorex to help she was, and devil a minute she had to spare aither, being just in the nick of time to be of any help at all, at all, to her. I didn't see her leave, though."

Mr. Gryce felt his interest cool. Reason told him how improbable it was that this person, with all her mysteries, could have been the runaway bride of Julius Molesworth. Even if this house had not been miles distant from the C—— Hotel, where he had himself seen her at seven o'clock of that same night, the great improbability of her flying from her own nuptials to assist in this very humble capacity at those of another, was too manifest for his consideration even. Yet, because habit was strong in him, and habit forbade him to leave a subject till he had exhausted it, he put in a word which he thought must settle the matter.

"You are an observing man," he remarked to Peter, "and seem to have noticed this girl closely. Was this bag she carried a small, yellow one?"

"It was not, thin," that person emphatically replied, while the butler shook his head. "It was small, that it was, but not a mark of yellow about it at all. I see it many's the time. It's black, it was."

"And would you know it if you saw it again?"

"I'll not say that, sur; but I could tell if it wur the same kind of one."

Mr. Gryce smiled, and produced from his capacious pocket the bag which had been found by him in the doctor's phaeton.

"Was it like this one?" he asked, holding it up between the two men, with the initials towards Peter, and the blank side towards the butler.

"No," was the former's reply, and "*Oui*," that of the latter.

He whirled the bag about.

"I never have see ze filagree on him like zat!" now exclaimed the butler.

"By the powers, that's it!" was, on the contrary, Peter's response.

Mr. Gryce laughed, and put the bag back in his pocket.

"You don't agree," he said.

"We do that," returned Peter.

But Mr. Gryce would not be convinced. He saw that if this was the bag that they had been in the habit of seeing on the arm of the girl who had visited Miss Gretorex, that it had always been carried with the initial-side in, and this again seemed a great improbability. He was about convinced that he was on a false trail. Disappointed and dissatisfied, he therefore cut the conversation short, and in a few minutes was about to leave this house for the second time in anything but a happy frame of mind. But this time he did not go out by the side-door. He was in the kitchen, and he naturally sought the kitchen exit. In doing this his eye fell upon the gravel walk that ran about the house. "Humph!" was his mental ejaculation.

But he saw something the next moment—having by this time stepped into the yard—which called from him something more than an exclamation. This was a small piazza, built one or two steps from the ground, for the use, as it appeared, of the servants of the house. It was square in shape, and had a high balustrade about it, terminating in pillars that supported the roof. It was the colour of this balustrade which drew his attention: it was of a bright and peculiar brown, and seemed to have been lately painted.

"Can it be that I have here found what I have so long been searching for?" he queried. And stepping upon the piazza, he ran his eye along the balustrade with the most careful scrutiny. Suddenly he paused, looked closer, and gave utterance to a sound expressive of satisfaction and keen wonder. From the supporting pillar nearest the steps a portion of paint had been rubbed, of the size and shape of the smudge on Mildred Farley's dress; and dried into the thin coating yet remaining was a woolly fuzz, so evidently blue in colour that even this old and experienced worker amongst marvels was taken aback, and thought he had never seen anything finer nor more conclusive.

It was with a very grave face he stepped back into the kitchen.

"Excuse me," said he, "but what a fine porch you have outside. I think I will come and visit you some evening next summer. Fun out there, eh?"

"Well now, do you hear that?" laughed the good-natured Peter.

"And how prettily it is painted! looks fresher than the rest of the house."

"Yis, the master intended using it at the time o' the wedding—what for I don't know—and it being well used up by that same fun ye wur axin' about, the count there bought a pot o' paint and wint over it on his own account. It didn't dry good like, and the master thanked the count, so he did, but didn't use the porch. I'm thinkin' he gave the count foive dollars for disappointin' him, do ye moind?"

And Peter, evidently thinking he had got the laugh on the butler this time, laughed himself, long and loud.

But Mr. Gryce did not laugh. A problem dark with mysteries was before him, and he had no disposition to mirth, and but little patience with those who had.

CHAPTER XV.

TESTS AND SURPRISES.

It was indeed a serious discovery he had made; how serious he could not yet determine. That the girl who had brought home Miss Gretorex's dresses, and who had been with her on the very evening she was married, was the same one who had been carried dead into Mrs. Olney's parlour at or near midnight of that same day, there could be no doubt.

But had she died here? It did not follow, though the fact that Miss Gretorex, or, as she was now called, Mrs. Cameron, showed such a disposition to deny any acquaintanceship with the girl, seemed to argue the existence of something strangely unpleasant between them. Yet it need not have been anything connected with the tragic end of the girl. Ladies of Mrs. Cameron's stamp are invariably cowards when it comes to appearing in a police court, or before a magistrate as a witness. Even men sometimes shrink from this ordeal, and resort to every subterfuge to hide the fact that they know anything about a crime or the party suspected of it. And she had this excuse, that she was a bride, and

naturally recoiled from any such unpleasant publicity in connection with her marriage.

Yet the desire of Molesworth to communicate his position to the Camerons! Was it purely on account of the medical case he mentioned? Mr. Gryce felt himself at liberty to doubt it. And the scream which had arisen from this house during the marriage ceremony! Whence did it come, and what did it mean? He had not realized its importance at the time, but now he felt that he must make every effort to discover both its source and occasion. Turning to the two men he remarked, in his off-hand way,—

"By the way, I heard something curious about the wedding here. A friend of mine told me that there was a big scream heard in the house, right in the middle of the ceremony. Was that so?"

"*Oui*, monsieur," quoth Jean, "zat Marguerite scream all ze time, and she scream zen."

Peter smiled indulgently.

"Is it Margaret, ye say? Whin will yez git over talkin' about her screamin' like a fool? Sure she wasn't in the house at all. Every one of us knows that, and it's time ye did too."

Jean shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"It was ze voice of Marguerite, I know him very well. I hear him many times, and I hear him zat time of ze wedding and always ze same."

"How the devil could she scream if she wasn't in the house?"

"Do Marguerite say she was not in ze house?"

"No, but don't we know she wasn't? Jim Dolan says she was in his little back room when the scream you spake of was heard. Haven't I told ye that over an' over again, ye spalpeen?"

"When Jeem Doling say me zat, zen I must hear him." And so the obstinate man had the last word.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gryce was smiling on a girl who had just come into the kitchen.

"And who do you think it was?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir," was the reply, with a half-fearful look over her shoulder. "Nobody knows. Some of us suspect it was nothing else than the——. If any one should die——"

"Now howld yer whist," broke in Peter. "Do yez moind me, it was a woman's scream, and a woman in a mighty state o' fear. But what there was to put fear into the heart of any one that night, it isn't in me power to tell."

And so on for five minutes more, while Mr. Gryce was asking himself what this scream, say it had been uttered by Mildred Farley, signified, and whether it pointed to the minute of her death or was occasioned by some fatal discovery which led her to future violence and self-destruction. That it was more the cry of fear than agony, his own memory told him, that death at that time and in the bride's apartment were facts that could scarcely have been hidden, and that for her to have taken the dose of poison in this house at all raised the question of how she could have come some time later under the protection of Dr. Molesworth and been carried by him through the streets about Madison Square to the drug-store and thence to her home. No; Mildred Farley had not perished in this house, unless——His very thoughts paused, his eye had fallen again upon the gravel walk that ran by that very piazza against the railing of which she had leaned, living or dead. There had been gravel under the shoe of Dr. Molesworth's horse. Was the mystery deeper than he supposed, and had Dr. Molesworth also been a visitor in this house on that fatal evening of his intended bride's death? It began to look as if he had. With the thought, light began to break upon the horizon and something of the darkness which had veiled this impenetrable mystery to disappear.

And yet how great were the difficulties in the way of proving this fact. None of the persons he was talking with had seen any such person as the doctor amongst the guests, nor had his appearance at the inquest called out any such witness from the public at large. And then, say he had been here, how fast he must have driven to have been down at Twenty-second Street at the time he was. But then Mr. Gryce remembered that his horse looked as if it had travelled far that night, and when a man has a purpose before him he does not spare his animal. But what had his purpose been? To save Mildred Farley or to destroy her?

Manifestly it was not to save her, or why had he lied about the place where he had found her and the way in which the bottle had been broken on the side-walk in Twenty-second

Street? Look at it whichever way the detective would, reason and experience still pointed towards the doctor as the possible author of her death. And so the affair was still full of mysteries, and he felt as if he had but crossed the threshold of his discoveries.

His last effort before leaving the kitchen was to determine the location of the back stairs. He found them situated in the most favourable manner for such a secret and unobserved departure as this young girl had taken. For, owing to the fact that that they descended immediately into a hall opening upon the driveway which ran about the house, it followed that upon such a night as this, when every one was busy, and the kitchen door communicating with this hall was in all probability closed or blocked up with strangers, she might slide down the stairs and so regain the street without any one noting her presence or detecting her departure. More than this, she could, if she so wished, have stepped upon the piazza and, not knowing its condition, sat down in one corner to wait—what for? Why—for the doctor, perhaps. She had written him a note, and why not in that note have told him where he could find her? There was no evidence yet forthcoming which made any of this impossible.

To determine then without all peradventure whether Molesworth's phaeton drove up to this house on that night or not, and then to ascertain the cause and meaning of Mrs. Cameron's silence in regard to her connection with this girl, became his two first leading duties. The immediate manner in which he set about fulfilling them showed that his youthful vigour had not yet entirely deserted him.

Bidding farewell to his friends in the kitchen, he passed out of the back door and round the house. The next minute the front door bell rang, and Jean, the butler, upon opening that door, was astounded at seeing before him the solemn and unmoved countenance of his late visitor, who, looking at him as if he had never seen him before, asked if Mrs. Gretorex was in, and being assured she was by the dumbfounded servant, stepped in and took his seat in the parlour as if he had never crossed the threshold of a kitchen in his life.

"He want to see Mrs. Gretorex? Why he want to see Mrs. Gretorex?" cried Jean, descending the back stairs three steps at a time.

"Shure I don't know," returned Peter, laying a sly finger against his nose; "but what I do know is this, I've business in the front hall, and it won't kape a minute; so good day to ye."

And he was off before Jean's slower wits took in the situation.

Mr. Gryce was labouring under Mrs. Gretorex's displeasure and he knew it. His first words, therefore, were uttered with that simple dignity which always inspires respect.

"You have consented to see me," was his opening remark. "You are very kind, for I feel that you have some reason not only to distrust my good judgment but the fairness of my conduct. Yet I but made a mistake which nine men out of ten would have made in my place. I was going to say ten men, but I do not wish to appear egotistical."

His smile was honest, his bearing respectful yet not subservient, his tone all that could be desired. But Mrs. Gretorex's pride was not easily subdued. She looked at him with cold severity, and observed in anything but a gracious tone:

"I do not understand to what you allude. I know of no mistake you made except that of taking Dr. Cameron into your confidence against my express wishes."

"Then he has not explained to you the meaning of our conduct that night?"

"I did not require it."

Mr. Gryce allowed a faint expression of surprise to escape him.

"You could not have known how interesting the subject was," he remarked. Then before she could speak, asked impressively, "Did you know that Miss Gretorex had a double in town that night?"

"A double?"

"Someone who looked like her; looked like her so much that even her best friend was deceived? I allude to Dr. Cameron."

The perplexity of Mrs. Gretorex was unmistakable.

"I have no idea what you mean," she declared, "and I cannot believe in any such likeness. Mrs. Cameron's expression is not a common one."

"So much the more excuse for me," he suggested. "I

thought I was completely justified in giving to this person the name of your daughter, especially as she wore a dress not unlike that in which Miss Gretorex was said to have disappeared."

Incredulity, mixed with a little anxiety, still held its own in the expression of Mrs. Gretorex's face.

"Still I do not understand you. Where was this person, and who did she turn out to be? You excite my curiosity, Mr. Gryce."

The detective glanced at the doors, and slightly changed his seat.

"Some things are best discussed in private," he suggested. "I thought I heard a step in the hall."

She rose and led the way into the library. "Say what you have to say," she exclaimed. "Who was the lady? I am eager to hear."

He took a position which enabled him to watch her face

"Her name you must already know," said he. "It has been in the papers enough lately. Mildred Farley, the girl who died of poison that same night."

"Farley?" trembled slowly from her lips. "*Farley?*"

"I thought the name would have a familiar sound," he murmured, noting carefully her look of startled amazement.

But she instantly disclaimed this assumption with calm composure.

"You mistake," she assured him. "I know nobody of that name. Why should you think I did?"

"Because she visited your house so often, was so well known to your daughter, and was, if I do not greatly mistake, in this very building and in Miss Gretorex's room the evening Miss Gretorex was married, and she herself met her fearful doom."

It was all news, and, as it seemed, unwelcome and astounding news, to the lady before him. She forgot his presence and her own reserve, and spoke as if he had not been in the room.

"A person by the name of Farley," she repeated, "known to Genevieve and like her enough to be called her double. What does it mean?"

He watched her, and made no answer; all the detective was alert in him.

"I believe you said she died," Mrs. Gretorex suddenly cried, rousing as if out of a dream. "Is it the same girl that was picked up from the sidewalk by somebody, and carried away in a gig?"

"The same, madam; a young dressmaker, you remember, who was to have been married that same night. But she preferred to assist your daughter at her wedding to taking part in one herself.

Mrs. Gretorex looked at him with wide open eyes, from which all the haughtiness had fled.

"You seem to know a great deal about Mrs. Cameron," she asserted; "more than her mother does or her best friends. I was not aware that anyone was here to assist my daughter, least of all a person who bore her looks and answered to the name of Farley. And yet it was a circumstance that would not be likely to escape attention. Some of the servants must have seen her if I did not. But none of them have spoken of it."

"They were too accustomed to her visits here."

"Too accustomed——"

"And then they did not see her face. She was always veiled."

"Do you mean," she demanded, "that the person who brought home my daughter's dresses, and whom my daughter received when she would see no one else, was a Far—was this girl who you say died on her wedding-night so suddenly and mysteriously?"

"I do. It has not been made public, nor am I sure that Mrs. Cameron herself knows of this identity. But certain evidences difficult to explain under any other theory, make it a positive fact to me. It is my reason for being here; the cause of our present conversation. I want to discover the truth about this girl."

Did Mrs. Gretorex suddenly change colour, or was it only his imagination that made him think so? She was a dignified worldly-wise woman, whom it would have taken much to shake out of her social calm. Was this *much* hidden in his words, and had it disturbed her equanimity? He could not tell.

"That is very natural," she conceded, with a slight change of position. "In your profession such inquiries become

duties; but I do not think you can find out much about her here."

"Certainly not, if you never met her nor spoke to her; and I believe you assured me you never had."

"Never, sir."

There was truth in her accents, as well as much hauteur; he found himself obliged to shift his ground.

"Then," said he, "I have only to bid you good-day. And yet"—he added, "there is one thing you can do for me and the cause of law and justice which I represent. Miss Farley, if here that night, went directly to your daughter's room. She wore a brown veil, and if, as presumably happened, she took off that veil, there is reason to believe she left it behind her. For when the body was brought home to her boarding-place, this article of apparel was not only missing, but another veil of different colour, and apparently quite new, was found clinging to her garments. Now if in the arrangement of the room after your daughter's departure a brown veil was found, there is provided one other small link towards making our chain of evidence complete."

"A brown veil is a very common affair; my daughter may have had a dozen for aught I know."

"Lying loose about the room?"

"How can I tell?"

"And you cannot accommodate me?"

"Oh, I cannot refuse you a look at the room. It is just as my daughter left it," she declared somewhat bitterly. "She has not found leisure to attend to it, and I certainly was not going to arrange and dispose of her effects without her assistance. But you speak of a chain of evidence. Evidence of what, and evidence against whom? It is surely not indiscreet for me to inquire."

"Madam, do you know a Dr. Molesworth of this city?"

"I do not."

"Are you sure that no such person was invited to your daughter's wedding?"

"Positive."

"Then if he was here at all, he was here against your knowledge?"

"Most certainly."

"We do not know that he was, but he is the person who

professed to pick up Miss Farley from the stoop of a house in Twenty-second Street, and as that story is somewhat incredible, we are trying to prove he carried her away from this house, where she certainly was in attendance on Miss Gretorex as early as nine o'clock in the evening."

"Then all you wish of us is to prove that attendance?"

He bowed.

"Why not prove it then in a simpler way? Can not Mrs. Cameron say whether she had any such person with her or not?"

He knew why this was asked. He knew that the mother's heart was throbbing with anxiety under all her pride and self-possession to learn what her equally proud daughter concealed under her silence and seeming indifference.

"I have not questioned Mrs. Cameron," he therefore said; "but from the fact that she has volunteered no information to the police, I take it for granted that she does not know the right name and history of the person she employed."

"Your conclusions are doubtless correct," the mother allowed. But she looked as if she would like to be assured of it. "And now will you come up to her room?"

Wondering at her calmness, for he knew that she had in some way received a blow, he rose and followed her upstairs. As they passed Peter, Mr. Gryce gave him a faint smile; perhaps in the way of remuneration for the disappointment he was conscious of having caused him.

I think that I have somewhere said that the room formerly occupied by Miss Gretorex was in the front of the house. It was large, and, as Mr. Gryce perceived upon their entrance, an exceedingly attractive and homelike apartment. But it was all in disorder at the present time, showing by its very condition that no foot had entered it since Mrs. Cameron went out. This circumstance was certainly a most fortunate one, and lent to the survey which this astute detective at once gave it, an interest it could not have otherwise possessed. Even Mrs. Gretorex seemed to catch the infection of the moment, and peered about in corners and under the tables as if her life depended upon finding some clue with which to help forward the cause of justice. He watched her as much as he studied the room, and only when he perceived that she was quite satisfied that no stray veil was to be found, did he

point to a pile of clothes that cluttered up a small alcove at one end of the room and remark :—

"Your daughter seems to have flung her whole wardrobe here in a heap. These are her clothes, are they not?"

"Certainly; old ones, which she had before she was married, but too good to be scattered about like this. I wonder—"

But here a voice, thick with emotion, broke in with the words :—

"What does this mean? what is this going on in my room without my knowledge?"

With a quick movement both turned. Mrs. Cameron, bonneted and wrapped in furs, was standing before them in the open doorway.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. CAMERON AT HER WORST—AND BEST.

For an instant Mrs. Gretorex and the detective, so dissimilar in all other regards, wore the same expression of disconcertion, but only for an instant. She from policy, and he from custom, soon assumed an aspect of self-possession; and Mrs. Gretorex, speaking in behalf of both, observed, with a nonchalance that the other secretly admired :—

"We were looking for that poor girl's veil. It seems that it is missing, and that the police imagine it to have been dropped here."

A mortal pallor spread a ghastly light over Genevieve Cameron's face.

"I am at a loss—" she began; but meeting her mother's eye, quailed, and caught hold of the door at her side for support.

"I suppose you knew that the young woman who was in the habit of bringing home your dresses died on your wedding-night?" that mother inexorably pursued.

No answer.

"You have not been so absorbed in your new life, that you have not read this in the papers?"

Genevieve shook her head.

"Why didn't you say something to some one then? I should have thought you would, Genevieve, if only to preserve us from the surmises and suspicions of the police. But perhaps you did not know what a secret you were hiding; perhaps the girl had not given you her real name or shown you her real face?"

"Her face?" repeated Mrs. Cameron under her breath, her eyes growing large and black in the stare she fixed upon her mother.

"Yes, they say, all say, that this girl, this Mildred Farley—was that the name she gave you?" Genevieve quivered. Did she nod yes or did that look of hers mean no—"looked so much like you that it was really remarkable."

Mrs. Cameron dropped at once into her usual manner. "Do they say that," she inquired loosening her furs with a steady hand and carelessly throwing them into a chair near by. "Well, it is odd!" And turning towards the hall, she cried almost gaily, "Come in, Walter, I have been caught in an equivocation and you must help me to reinstate myself."

Promptly at this call, the tall form and fine features of Dr. Cameron appeared on the threshold.

"I do not understand you," said he, "but I will do what I can." And there he paused, for his eye had fallen on Mr. Gryce, and he experienced a vague trouble that he instinctively sought to hide.

"It is not much," explained Genevieve, looking magnificent in her nonchalant disdain. "I knew Mildred Farley, and I had several dealings with her in this house; but I did not say so, and, indeed, disclaimed the fact when questioned on the subject; for—and it may seem a lame excuse to you—I hate everything connected with law courts. Besides, she did look astonishingly like me, and I knew that I should be made the victim of much unpleasantness if I were forced to appear as a witness before those who knew her. If all this betrays weakness I stand condemned. I am sure I am glad to be rid of my secret, for I took no pleasure in keeping it I assure you."

Her ease, her grace, her confidence in her own charm to make even a worse peccadillo than this forgotten, would have

influenced most any man in her favour; but Dr. Cameron was stern in his principles, and hated deceit in small things more perhaps than he did in great. She saw his altered face, and her head began to droop.

"Can I do anything to remedy my fault?" she asked.

Mr. Gryce stepped rapidly forward.

"You can tell us whether you left her in this room when you went down to be married."

The stare which she had fixed on her mother a few minutes before was nothing to that which she bestowed upon the detective at this simple suggestion. It froze Dr. Cameron's blood, for he remembered—ah! with what fatal precision—all the doubts and terrors of that hour from the moment when the change had taken place in Genevieve at the sight of the woman she now acknowledged to be Mildred Farley, to that instant of relief when she fainted away on his shoulder in the carriage. But his emotion, intense as it was, soon disappeared before the arch smile that presently broke up the fixity of her stony gaze.

"And do you know all that too?" she asked. "What clever people you are! I declare I never imagined the police were such adepts at getting information. Yes, she was with me that night, helped me to dress and arrange my veil. I had not expected her, for she had received her pay when she brought home the last dress, and I had no reason to think she would come; but her presence was very welcome for all that, and she assisted me, as I say, and when the time came for me to go down, I left her to go home when she got ready. Was there anything wrong in that?"

"Certainly not, madam; we only wish to get at the facts. And was she there when you returned?"

"No." Mrs. Cameron lightly shook her head. "She had disappeared; I had not expected her to remain. Walter, where are you going? Wait for me, do; this gentleman will not keep me much longer I know."

Dr. Cameron, who had withdrawn from the doorway at this last word of his wife paused on the spot where he stood, but did not come back into the room.

"My husband is in a hurry," she explained to the detective, "is there anything more you would like to ask me about this girl?"

"Well, yes, madam, there is," returned Mr. Gryce suavely. "In the first place, I should like to know how you became acquainted with her; then, how far that acquaintanceship went, and, lastly, what light you can throw upon her death. All these things it would be of service to me to hear, for as you already know, there is suspicion abroad that she did not meet her death by her own free will and act, but was helped to it by a certain person whom you also know, or at least, have lately seen."

"Walter, can you spare me five minutes?" she inquired, going to the door, and looking smilingly into the hall.

"Thirty,—if you can explain yourself satisfactorily to this man," was the almost stern reply.

She drew back, grieved, probably, at the tone, which was short and sharp, and her manner became graver and her look more anxious.

"I will tell what I know," she murmured. "It is not much, but it may help the detectives a little. First, then, I became acquainted with Mildred Farley through her asking me for work. She heard—I do not know how—that I was going to be married, and she came to me here one day, and asked if I would not employ her to make my dresses. I laughed, naturally, for though she was a respectable appearing person—I did not know of her likeness to me then, for she did not lift her veil—her name was wholly unknown to me, and to one who had had some dim idea of employing Worth, this proposition of hers seemed ridiculous. But she begged so hard for me to try her with one dress that I became interested in her and requested her to remove her veil. She did so, but with a hesitation I was at a loss to understand, till her features being disclosed I beheld in them as it were a mirror of my own. Then, indeed, I became interested in good faith, and asked her question after question. But her replies told me little. She was the daughter of a poor widow who was dying of consumption, and it was her desire to support that mother. She had learned the trade of dress-making, and felt that she had the talent to make me a costume to my liking. Would I try her? She would work with all the more spirit that personally she was a poor imitation of myself,—That is the way she put it. I could not deny her; it would be too much like denying a favour to myself, so I

gave her material and allowed her to take my measure, and was so astonished at the final result, that I let her make all my dresses; only stipulating that she should always come veiled to the house, as the extraordinary likeness between us would otherwise occasion remark. That I kept all this from you, mother, is not so strange when you consider that the similarity in appearance which interested me in her favour would certainly have prejudiced you against her, your pride being of an older growth than mine, though mine is none too lightly rooted either."

The *naïve* look, the hand half held out, seemed to arouse Mrs. Gretorex from something like a trance. Sighing, as if with a great relief, she smiled upon her daughter and for the first time since she had been in the room, looked about for a chair and sat down.

"You understand your mother," she declared, and smoothed out her dress with an easy return to her natural manner that impressed the detective profoundly.

"And now how much more have I to tell about her," proceeded Genevieve, with a thoughtful air. "I don't know anything about her death, and——"

"Excuse me, madam," interrupted Mr. Gryce, with grave respect, "has not this young girl, who was so evidently the recipient of your kindness, ever spoken to you of her own troubles or anxieties? Did she never mention Julius Molesworth's name to you, or confide to you the fact that she contemplated marriage with him?"

"I don't know what to say to that," returned Mrs. Cameron, with an appealing look in her husband's direction. "Help me, Walter. Ought I to answer these questions when I do not know how they will affect a person who unfortunately lies under the shadow of suspicion, but whom I do not believe to be guilty of any crime?"

"I think you had," rejoined her husband, taking a step nearer to her as he spoke. "I have always found that the truth never harms the innocent. If Julius Molesworth is guiltless (and I also believe he is), you can say nothing that will hurt him. Answer the detective then, frankly. I could not be happy if I thought my wife kept back anything she knew, bearing upon so important a matter as this."

His tone was no longer sharp but studiously gentle. Gene-

vieve seemed to gather courage and turned to the detective with a gracious air.

"What is it you want to know; whether Mildred Farley ever spoke to me of Dr. Molesworth? She did, but guardedly. Shortly after her mother's death, she told me how lonely she felt and how dreadful the future looked to her. Then with some hesitation informed me that she had had an offer of marriage from the doctor who took care of her mother, but did not say whether she intended accepting it or not. I gathered, however, from her manner that she did, and later I was quite sure of it; but we did not talk on the subject much, for I did not know Dr. Molesworth, and was, besides, rather selfishly filled with thoughts of my own prospects. A few days before I was married, though, we did a strange thing. I hardly know how to tell it—for I am sure I shall shock my mother, and possibly my husband. But he has told me to speak and I will speak. In the course of our interviews—and she came quite often to this house—we became quite attached. She was not by any means a common person, and had a spirit and brightness which I admired. To enjoy her companionship, and also to procure the rest of which I stood in sore need, I therefore proposed to her that we should take a vacation together. She was not to tell her friends and I was not to tell mine, but we were to meet and go away to some place where we could enjoy our freedom and each other's society without restraint. It was an erratic thing to do, and as I look at it now it appears undignified if not improper; but I was not married then, and the dash and romance of the thing pleased me. We accordingly carried it out, and for two days or more we boarded together in a respectable boarding-house in Newark, where we passed for nurse and patient, I being the patient and Mildred the nurse. I wonder at it now," she murmured—"but we meant no harm and it was very amusing. Mildred especially seemed to enjoy herself exceedingly, and when we came to part, as we did on the morning of my wedding-day, she thanked me with the utmost earnestness for what she called the merriest days of her life. I little thought that before twenty-four hours had passed she would be dead, and possibly by her own hand."

Mrs. Cameron paused; the detective at once took up the thread.

"You parted, you said. May I ask where?"

"On the corner of Broad and Franklin Streets. She came back to the city and I went to my cousin's. He did not tell you I had been there but a few hours," she said to her mother, with a half smile.

Mrs. Gretorex's reply was inaudible, but contempt sat on her lip, and Mrs. Cameron did not look that way again.

"I have ruined my position as the unapproachable Miss Gretorex," she murmured, with sly, yet daring sarcasm, as she turned away. "I cannot boast again that I have never mingled with inferiors; and if I should have to make this escapade public——" She stopped and cast a side glance at her husband, "Indeed! I wish I had never engaged in it. I do, indeed, if only for your sake and the mortification which must come."

He waved his hand indifferently.

"That is of small moment now. The question is, did Mildred Farley take the dose of poison herself, or was it administered by Julius Molesworth?"

"Yes," chimed in Mr. Gryce, "that is the question. But Mrs. Cameron does not seem to be in a position to answer it. Unless," he added, "she can tell us with what intentions Miss Farley professed to leave her."

"I understood that she was to be married the same evening as myself," that lady immediately answered.

"You must have been surprised, then, when you saw her walk into your room."

"I was more than surprised. I did not know what to make of it."

"And what excuse did she give?"

"Very little. She said she had changed her mind about being married that night, and had come to assist me in my preparations. It was a delicate subject, and I did not put any questions, especially as she seemed very sober and unhappy. If she had wished me to know any particulars about herself she would have told me. As she was silent, I took it for granted that she did not wish to explain herself further."

"And she said nothing about death or suicide? Nothing about not seeing you again, or anything of that kind?"

Mrs. Cameron stopped to think. "Her whole manner was that of one greatly troubled. She may have said good-bye; I

think she did; but I was excited on my own account and do not perfectly remember. I can give it as my impression, however, that she was in a state of suppressed emotion great enough to lead her into almost any deed of desperation. I believe she took the poison herself; but mere belief, I am told, does not go for much before a jury."

"No," returned Mr. Gryce, "but it may influence a detective." And bowing low to either lady, he expressed his thanks for their patience, and the kind way in which they had answered his questions. He then prepared to leave; but Mrs. Gretorex detaining him by an appeal for such consideration as he could find it in his power to show them, Genevieve slipped out of the room before him, and running up to her husband's side, laid her two hands on his arm and sought to look into his face.

"You are angry with me," she murmured, "justly angry. My conduct appears to you light, and my prevarications unpardonable. I do not wonder, Walter, I do not wonder; but there was no guile in my heart, only weakness. I acknowledge it, and I crave forgiveness. Is it an impossible thing for you to grant?"

He did not answer. Seizing her by the hands, he drew her further down the hall, into a recess which was lighted by a large window of coloured glass.

"Genevieve," he cried, "I am not thinking now of your prevarications; I am thinking of what you said to Mr. Gryce when he asked you if you left Mildred Farley behind you in your room when you went down to be married. You replied 'yes,' and yet I distinctly saw you, on that night and at that time, lock the door behind you when you came out, and put the key in your bosom. If there was a woman there whom you did not expect to see when you returned, why did you do this?"

"Because"—she moistened her lips but did not drop her eyes from his gaze—"because I did not know what I was doing. I was terribly excited, Walter—I wonder if all brides are when they are married—and then I had that pain; it came upon me just as I was crossing the threshold—from the excitement, I suppose—and what with the one thing and the other, I was all in a daze, and locked the door and took the key away. I thought of it afterwards, but it was too late; and

the mystery to me, then and now, is how she managed to escape in my absence. There is no other key and no other door, yet she was gone when I returned, and I neither know how nor where."

"Do not let that disturb you," said a soft voice at their side. "It is a matter easily to be explained." And Mr. Gryce, stepping round the angle of the hall, motioned towards the room from which they had just come. "If you will step back with me for a moment I can show you how Miss Farley managed to escape."

Genevieve's eyes dilated, and for an instant she seemed to hesitate. Did this man appear to her like a shadow, and was she beginning to dread his eye and ear?

"I cannot imagine——" she began, but presently thought better of her objections and hastily followed her husband, who was only too anxious to have this mystery explained.

"You say there is no other door," declared the detective, as they re-entered the room from which they had just come. "That is true; but there is still a way of escape easy enough for a person who is very anxious to effect one. See there!" And he pointed towards a window at the end of the alcove I have before mentioned."

Dr. Cameron advanced. "Ah, I see," he observed. The window opened on to the roof of a piazza.

"This room has not been entered since that night," resumed Mr. Gryce. "Yet this window, you observe, is unlocked. Now, if any of the other windows opening upon this roof were also unlocked it would require only a little climbing for her to pass into the room adjoining, and so, by way of the hall, to the back stairs."

"It is so," assented the doctor.

"We may regard that matter as settled then," proceeded Mr. Gryce. "But what is still to be decided is why this veil of Miss Farley's, which I hold in my hand, should have been found by me under the heap of clothing at our feet. If Mrs. Cameron can explain this as easily as I can the method of the girl's departure, I shall be much obliged, for I own it seems inexplicable to me."

Dr. Cameron turned and looked at his wife. She had not followed them into the alcove, but stood in the centre of the

main room with her eyes fixed, not on him, but on the heap of clothing to which Mr. Gryce had pointed.

"Do you hear, Genevieve?" he asked. "Mr. Gryce wants to know if you can account for this veil of Mildred Farley's being found under this pile of clothing."

She tore her eyes from the spot where they were looking and fixed them upon him.

"How does he know it was Mildred Farley's veil? By the colour? I had one of that same colour myself. But let me see it; I can soon tell if it is mine or not."

She held out her hand. Mr. Gryce left the alcove and laid the veil in it. She gave it a cursory glance and tossed it back.

"It is not mine," said she; "it must be hers. As for its being found where you say, there is nothing so strange about that. I was dressing and I wanted an article of clothing. I had difficulty in finding it, and, being nervous and in haste, I tore down half the dresses in my closet and flung them on the floor. When Mildred Farley came she carried them into the alcove to get them out of the way. Her veil must have dropped off her hat as she stooped over them."

How simple! Dr. Cameron's head rose in complete relief. Mrs. Gretorex appeared satisfied and swept from the room; only Mrs. Cameron looked fatigued, harassed, and half-indignant. The detective saw it, but allowed himself to put one more question.

"And was the light grey veil which was found on Miss Farley yours?"

"I do not know. I bought so many things about that time that I cannot remember what I had. I only know I found no suitable veil when I came to put on my hat."

There was no more to be said. Mr. Gryce again thanked her for her kindness, and politely took his departure. He had no sooner left the house than Mrs. Cameron sought her mother.

"I came this morning to look over my things with you," she declared. "But this man has so tired me with his endless questions that I am no longer fit for it. Won't you take your own time and just dispose of the things yourself? I am sure I shall be perfectly satisfied with whatever you decide to do with them. I don't seem to have any heart for it."

And without waiting for a response she took her husband's arm and drew him down the stairs. "Shall I ever make my peace with you?" she murmured.

He smiled a happy smile.

"We are too young to make mountains out of mole-hills. Since your sins are only those of an ordinary fashionable woman, I will try and forget them, especially as I have confidence you will never repeat what you know gives me pain."

She stopped at the foot of the stairs to kiss him.

"Oh, how I love you!" she murmured. "And how true and devoted a wife I will be if you will only let me." And her eyes gleamed and her face looked as if it had been dipped in dew, so bright was the change which his kind words made.

As they stepped into their carriage they saw the portly figure of Mr. Gryce disappearing around the corner.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SUDDEN RELEASE.

It was evident that Julius Molesworth must go to prison. If Mildred Farley had been murdered, he was the man to whom her death was due. If she had not—but that was a question for the Grand Jury to determine; the duty of the police lay in arresting him. To be sure the case was not as strong against him as it had been against some criminals Mr. Gryce had known. But then a case of poisoning is always more impenetrable than one in which the knife or pistol has been used; for, whereas the wound made by knife or bullet usually tells its own tale, and determines, either by its direction or character, the all-important question as to whether or no the death was self-inflicted, poison keeps its own secrets, and only by the surrounding circumstances can we judge whether the victim raised the glass to his own lips or had it forced upon him by another. But here were circumstances of a direct and telling nature which pointed to murder; for upon

what other theory than a skilfully premeditated plan to conceal his crime can we account for the story told by Dr. Molesworth of his finding the girl in a dying condition on a certain stoop, when the real facts of the case show that she perished in his phaeton, and that the bottle was flung out and broken on the sidewalk, merely to give colour to the statement he intended to make. Only a coward of the basest stamp, or a man conscious of being subject to the law, would resort to such a lie and such an action; and Dr. Molesworth had no appearance of being a coward. On the contrary, he had every sign of being a deep-thinking, strong-acting, and self-reliant man. To prison, therefore, he must go, and without further delay; the explanations given by the only other person who was known to talk with Mildred that night merely served to show the necessity of it.

This conclusion reached, action immediately followed. Mr. Gryce was sent to complete the arrest, and by two o'clock in the afternoon he and the doctor made their appearance at police head-quarters on their way to the magistrate. But here a delay occurred. For no sooner had Mr. Gryce stepped through the doorway than a man grasped him by the arm and an eager voice whispered in his ear:

"I've got her. She's here. It's been a hard chase, for she is frightened about something, and tried to keep out of the way. But I found her at last, and it only remains for you to make her talk."

Mr. Gryce's pale cheek took on a little colour. Peering hastily about, his glance fell on the shrinking form of a young woman pressed up against the wall near by.

"That is all right," he declared; and turning to Dr. Molesworth, he informed him that he would have to give him up to other hands for a few minutes as he had some important business to transact. Then he disappeared with the girl into the inspector's office.

He was gone some time, and when he came back the girl was not with him. But the inspector was, and it was he who stepped up to the doctor and informed him that the suspicions against him had been proved unfounded, and that he was at liberty to depart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

Dr. Cameron's office offered a great contrast to that of Dr. Molesworth. Instead of gloom there was cheer; instead of bareness there was a tasteful display of rich furniture and valuable works of art. Yet the man sitting there possessed as strong a soul, and held as firm a grip on his profession as his less self-indulgent and less prosperous rival. His prospects of success were brighter too, for not only had he every advantage of wealth and station to assist him, but he had also that genius for plunging at a glance to the bottom of things, which Molesworth lacked; the latter being forced to earn every step of his way by the severest study and the most intense mental effort.

Dr. Cameron was meditating upon all this that same night as he waited for his wife whom he was expecting home from an entertainment where he had been obliged to leave her in order to attend to an urgent case. He was meditating upon it and thinking of her, for she mingled with all his thoughts now, as the perfume of a flower we have fastened in our breast mingles with each breath that we take. She was so fair, so tender, so baffling. There was such love in her look, such haunting music in her voice. He did not know that a woman's glance and tone could affect him so. He had been surprised into love; and she who had performed this miracle was his own wife—the woman he was bound to love, cherish and sustain to the end!

The entertainment from which he was expecting her was a reception, and it was time for her to be home. He had not gone after her for fear of passing her on the road. He was listening, then, with all a lover's anxiety for the sound of wheels, when his eye suddenly fell on the clock. It was a quarter to twelve, and she ought to have been in the house at eleven.

Surprised, and alarmed even, he rang the bell and asked

the sleepy servant who attended him whether Mrs. Cameron had come home.

"Oh yes, sir," was the unexpected reply. "She returned before you did."

Relieved, he put out the lights and hurried upstairs. She was not in her boudoir, nor was she in the bedroom beyond.

He rang the bell again.

"But Mrs. Cameron is not here!" said he to the servant.

"Then she must be upstairs, sir, in the little room. She does often sit there when she is alone."

Dr. Cameron remembered this fact now and dismissed the man. It was not the first time he had been told that same thing; but he could never understand it and did not now, for the room alluded to was small and well-nigh unfurnished, and he could see no good reason for her secluding herself in such an unwelcome spot when she had her own luxurious apartments at her command. Did she wish to get away from him? It could not be. Was the light better up there? The supposition was absurd. What was this mystery then? He had an impulse to go up at once and see, but he did not. He was either too proud or too considerate; he preferred to wait a few minutes longer, sitting in her solitary boudoir.

"When the clock strikes twelve," thought he, "I will go for her. Till then let me read her books." And he took up a dainty volume which had been amongst her wedding-presents, and set himself to peruse one of its choicest poems. He had reached some very tender lines when he suddenly experienced a thrill and looked up. Was it a spirit who stood before him? No; no spirit ever had a face filled with such human emotion, so sad, so wistful, and yet so bright with tenderness and resolve. It was Genevieve, but Genevieve in a mood he could not fathom. Clad in a soft woollen garment of the purest white, without any adornment to relieve its sweeping lines, she stood in the doorway and looked at him till he was seized by a feeling of the uncanny, and rising, held out his arms as if he knew that would break the spell.

And it did.

With a swift and gliding step she crossed the room and stood before him. How deep were her eyes! how pallid her cheek; how solemn her whole air and manner.

"Walter," she murmured, before he could speak, "I dis-

pleased you to-day, or rather I showed myself to be less of a woman than you expected. This has broken my heart; I cannot live feeling that you have no confidence in my word and possibly not in my acts. I would rather die at once and leave all this happiness, for it will not be happiness if I must look in your face constantly to see if you believe what I say and have faith in me and a continuing love. And so, Walter, I have come to you at this solemn hour, fresh from my prayers, and as I hope from my repentance, to say that I have told my last lie, petty or large. Whatever comes"—she paused, and a spasm passed over her face—"I will speak nothing but the truth hereafter, and this I swear, not by the Bible, but by the dearest thing to me in life—my husband's love." And reaching up her two hands, she laid them on the broad, white brow that bent over her, with a look which gave a weight to her words which made them sink deep into his heart.

"Genevieve!" he cried, drawing down her hands in his and pressing them to his heart.

"Do not speak just yet," she pleaded. "Let me feel you hold me to your heart in perfect confidence."

Wondering at an emotion so deep as to be almost appalling, he drew her to his breast and held her so without a word. Her eyes closed and a look of perfect peace settled for an instant over her features. Then she withdrew herself, and clasping her two hands tightly together, questioned him with her eyes as much as to say,—

"What do you want of me? Ask what you will and I will tell the truth."

But he, with a happy laugh, caught her passionately in his arms, saying:

"Now that I have my jewel without a flaw, let me enjoy the moment to its full; for now for the first time in my life I am a perfectly happy man."

This took place at midnight. The next morning Mrs. Cameron asked her husband if he had any patients on the East Side. He answered that he had a few, but that he mainly rode over there to visit Dr. Molesworth's patient at the hospital.

"Who is doing well?" she inquired.

"Who is doing very well."

"Would you mind"—she spoke timidly—"if I sometimes went with you when you go to visit the poor? I would like being with you, and I would like to see the people you help."

"You would?" A new light visited his face. It had been a dream of his to have a wife who would take an interest in his work.

"You shall go with me this very day," said he, and hurried her upstairs to get ready.

They drove to the hospital first. Entering the ward where Bridget Halloran lay, the woman whose case had been transferred to Dr. Cameron by Molesworth, they passed down through the two lines of cots, where Genevieve at a glance beheld more suffering than she had ever seen before in her life, and came out into that part of the room devoted to the use of this special patient. As they did so, Dr. Cameron paused, and so did Genevieve, for seated beside the poor woman was a man whose back turned towards them, roused in both a strange feeling of surprise and bewilderment.

"Is it——" she whispered. But here the gentleman rose and turned. There was no longer reason for hesitation or doubt. The face and form were those of Dr. Molesworth.

Dr. Cameron stepped briskly forward.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said he. "How long ——" But here he discreetly paused, and gave his sentence another turn, "have you been able to be out?"

"Since yesterday," was the brief reply. Here he bowed to Mrs. Cameron. "You take interest in our patient," he remarked.

"This is my first visit," she replied. "I hope you are satisfied with her condition?"

Julius Molesworth let his grave gaze rest on the fair face of his interlocutor for a moment. Then he shook his head, and answered:—

"The case is mysterious, and I do not altogether understand its secret workings, but I hope all will go well. My greatest anxiety is that no mistake is made behind my back.—I do not allude to you, doctor, you know that, but to the women. I shall, however, pursue undeviatingly the line I have marked out, and I hope Dr. Cameron still agrees with me that it is a wise one."

He looked at his coadjutor as he spoke, and that gentleman at once bowed.

"She is doing well," he remarked. "I do not see how you can expect anything more."

Dr. Molesworth smiled, and waved his hand towards the patient.

"Have your little talk with her," he suggested; "the good woman misses it. She says you do so set her up with your bright looks." And he stepped aside to another cot, where he remained for a few minutes while Dr. Cameron and his wife talked to Bridget. But the moment they turned to go he was back again, and holding out his hand to Mrs. Cameron, observed, "There are limitations to all our self-sacrifices; though Dr. Cameron has done so well in my absence, I cannot say that I am sorry to be at liberty again to take care of my own patients."

"No—yes—" she murmured, looking down at his hand with a sudden and violent change of colour. "I—I——" she turned away and laid her hand on her husband's arm. "Do you wish to stay any longer?" she asked. "It seems to me we ought to be going."

There was confusion in her tone, while her manner to the doctor had certainly savoured of rudeness; but Dr. Molesworth seemed neither to notice the one nor the other.

"I am in no hurry," said he, "to lose the doctor's company, especially as I have another case here which I am sure it will interest him to see," and he looked at Dr. Cameron, who at once cried,—

"I am on hand for anything of that kind."

"Come, then," cried the other; "but first excuse me while I take off my cuffs, I can do nothing at a bedside with them on."

And while the two waited, this strange man pulled off his cuffs, and put them in the pocket of his overcoat, after which operation his brow looked lighter, and he passed with them up the hall, chatting quite genially.

Genevieve felt sick at heart. This business was not as pleasant in reality as in anticipation, but she kept by their side, thankful that she was not expected to say anything. On their return she again expressed a wish to leave, and this time no demur was made. But just as they turned to go, a startled cry made them look back.

It was from Dr. Molesworth, and the word he had uttered was,—

"*Lost!*"

"What is lost?"

It was Dr. Cameron who spoke; his wife seemed incapable of uttering a word.

Dr. Molesworth laughed. "Excuse me," said he, "I did not mean to be so tragic; but in our short absence my cuffs have been taken out of my overcoat pocket, and though the loss is not great it is certainly annoying."

"I know who did it," cried a voice near them. "It was that slim, small man who came in after——"

But Dr. Cameron did not keep his wife waiting any longer to hear these simple explanations: the affair seemed altogether too puerile.

Would he have thought any more seriously of it had he known that on the inside of one of those cuffs,—the one which had been on the hand which Dr. Molesworth had extended to Genevieve, were written in large characters these words:—

"*Beware! I was not released so suddenly without a motive.*"

CHAPTER XIX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

It must not be supposed that the sudden and remarkable change which had taken place in Mrs. Cameron's physical appearance had passed unnoticed or uncommented upon by society. It was only too widely discussed, and while it formed the basis of innumerable compliments, it also awakened an equal number of surmises and questionable remarks.

"They say that Marie Antoinette's hair changed in a night," it was not uncommon to hear. "But then there was a reason for that!" was almost invariably added. And the curiosity and interest which were thus aroused in both the male and

female bosom, surrounded the youthful bride with such a halo of romance, that the mass of people forgot to criticize her, and only asked to admire. But there were some (there always are some) who could not see the rose for the thorns, or the star for the mist of their own breath blowing across it. From these, one could hear now and then sharp comments upon the pride which made Mrs. Cameron forget the courtesy due to her old friends, and strictures upon her manners which had grown both freer and more liable to sudden reserves than of old. But such derogatory remarks were uttered mainly in asides, and only now and then did they come to the ears of her they most concerned. But that they did come sometimes was evident from the half-shrinking, half-disdainful look she now and then cast behind her in a throng; and it was from experiences like these, perhaps, came the distaste which she now began to manifest for the great crowds and sumptuous entertainments in which she had at first delighted. Were they to blame also for the increasing pallor of her cheek, and the general decadence of her health which Dr. Cameron could not but notice? He at first thought so; but as days passed and her spirits lessened rather than revived, in seclusion, he began to watch her more closely, fearing to detect under her languor and growing melancholy the traces of disease yet more serious than the rheumatism of which she still now and then complained.

But his watchfulness and care only seemed to aggravate her trouble. She shrank when she found his eye upon her, and often at some petty shock, like the ringing of the door-bell or the sound of an unexpected voice over her shoulder, she gave such nervous starts that he became seriously alarmed, and commenced to doctor her in good earnest.

It was evening. They had just returned from dining with Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex, and the shadow which invariably fell upon Genevieve whenever she visited her parents, still showed in her manner and expression. Her husband perceived it, but did not marvel greatly at an effect he could easily understand. There was a chilliness in the atmosphere of the Gretorex mansion which he felt himself, and, while he was conscious of being an agreeable son-in-law to the proud railway king, he was also conscious of possessing no hold either upon his heart or that of his aristocratic wife. But as they

never showed affection even to each other, he accepted their formal regard and was satisfied, finding his sole happiness in his ministrations to his wife and the unconcealed gratitude with which she rewarded every token of his affection.

They were sitting in the parlour, and Dr. Cameron, anxious to behold her smile again, was talking gaily. Suddenly he paused, and asked her a question about some one they had seen. She answered but vaguely; her thoughts were elsewhere. Judging from the direction of her gaze, they were on herself; she sat where she could see her own image mirrored in the glass before her, and it was upon this elegant figure, clad in grey velvet and pearls, that her eyes were fixed with an intentness which might have suggested the presence of innate vanity, if the disdain which curled her lip had not shown that she half despised the beauty which required so much splendour to adorn it.

Her husband's eyes followed hers and glistened merrily.

"An imposing figure," he smiled. "Did you think you would ever be a famous beauty, Genevieve?"

She rose up with an instantaneous impulse, and coming to his side, knelt down at his feet.

"Am I pretty," she asked,—"to you?"

"No," he returned, "you are not pretty, you are beautiful, and just a little awe-inspiring. I love you, and I wonder at you; you are so different——"

She did not wait for him to finish.

"You love me," she murmured. "How much do you love me, Walter? Enough to care more for me than for my beauty? Would your heart still glow and your arms still embrace me, if instead of pleasing your eye I only appealed to your sympathies and your affections? Do not say yes, carelessly, Walter, for I am in earnest and rely upon your word. How deep have I sunk into your heart? Past the first boundary or not, Walter? Speak! I am strong enough to hear."

Affected deeply, for her look was even more earnest than her words, he drew her to his side, and answered gravely:

"You are my wife; you are the woman I have chosen and would choose again out of all I have ever seen, for my own. I love your beauty—how can I help it!—and I love what gives that beauty life. Had I to choose, were it given me, to

have this lovely form, these brilliant eyes, this whole harmonious and speaking figure, with a cold and treacherous soul within it, or to have your heart, your intellect and your nature in a faded or marred body, I would take——"

"Which?"

Her eyes were burning, her lips were parted: she was breathless.

"Your heart and nature; I know I should, and I rejoice in it. You have charmed me, Genevieve; I cannot resist your spell, nor do I try any longer to do so. Were these features all overcast there would still be your personality left—a personality which I do not understand, but which holds me and interests me more than any amount of grace or beauty could do."

"Then I am an enigma, only an enigma to you. When I am solved——"

"Will you ever be solved, Genevieve?"

She did not look as if she would. The depth of her regard, which was always remarkable, never struck him more forcibly than at this moment, while the smile that just touched and sweetened the corners of her lips, possessed a melancholy for which he could find little reason, save in the strength and fervour of her fully aroused feelings.

"I think the day will come," she remarked, "when you will no longer wonder at me. Will it be also true that you will no longer love me?"

She did not seem to expect a reply, and he did not give any. He felt sure of himself, but why repeat asseverations that were as old as love? He merely smiled at her, and waited for the new question that hovered on her lips. It seemed to be a serious one, more serious than any which had gone before. It looked as if she dreaded to put it. He encouraged her with a kiss on the hand that lay in his.

"I see; you want to know what I am going to ask next," she pursued. "Well, I may be a foolish woman, but I have a fancy to probe your heart to the bottom. Would you love me—" she drooped her eyes from his face—"if you found that I had kept something back from you which I ought to have told; that—that I had ever been in love before, or—or thought I was; that I was not just what you imagined me to be when you married me, and that—that I had a secret in my

life, as many women have, which, while it argues nothing wrong in my heart, still lends to my hours many regrets, and to my thoughts a shadow which all the present brightness cannot quite charm away?"

"Genevieve!" His face had changed; his lips took a hard line. "Have you any such secret in your life? Did you ever love another man?"

She looked up, met his eye and quaked. "Do you demand to know?" she asked.

His brows contracted; he thought of the promise she had given him to always tell him the truth, and hesitated. What if she said yes? would it increase their happiness? They were married; she loved him now, and any such raking up of old bygones was certainly unwise as it was unpleasant. Besides, who could expect to have the first love of a Genevieve Gretorex? A woman who has counted her suitors by scores might be pardoned for having yielded one jot of her pent up womanly emotions in return. He would not press his question; he found he loved her too well.

"I demand nothing," was his reply. "The past is past; and we no longer have anything to do with it. As long as your heart is all mine now—and I am sure it is—what is it to me that you once smiled for a week or a month upon someone else? I would dare wager that no one but myself ever touched these lips."

Her smile flashed out bright and dazzling. "No one ever did," said she; and at that word, and at that smile, his brow cleared, and he almost laughed. "Most every life has had some harmless flirtations in it," he remarked. "I adored a girl myself once—for a fortnight; but that does not make me unhappy now. On the contrary, I think it adds a little to my satisfaction. The value of true gold is more apparent after some slight handling of dross."

She drooped her head; there was a far-away look in her eyes; she did not seem to hear what he said.

"I wish I could see you really cheerful again," he ventured. "You are not ill enough to look so sad."

Brought back to realities, she moved a little further from him, while a reckless gleam shot from her eyes.

"I have read," she began, slowly, and as if pursuing her own train of thought, "that love is all powerful with some

men. That no ambition is considered too dear, no hope too precious to stand in the way of their passion. Is there truth in such tales? Is there a man among your acquaintance, for instance, who would be willing to sacrifice any really good thing he possessed, for the sake of an unfortunate woman who was dependent upon him for happiness?"

"I hope——," he commenced.

But she stopped him with an imperious gesture.

"Do you know of one man," she asked, "who would share disgrace with a woman cheerfully?"

"Disgrace is a hard word," he asserted, "and *cheerfully* does not readily go with it."

"Yet women know how to join the two," said she, "when it comes to forsaking all for the man they love."

"I know; but women who love are angels, while men are never more than human under any circumstances."

She did not answer his smile; she was pale, and looked as if an icy breath had passed over her.

"Is reputation so dear to you men?" she demanded. "Are your souls bound up in appearing well before the world?"

"Genevieve," said he, "these are curious questions; I do not understand why you put them nor will I ask. But since you are in this humour I will acknowledge that the keenest agony that can be inflicted on a proud man is to rob him of his honourable position amongst men. He may suffer acutely from other losses; his heart may be wrung and his existence embittered; but if his career is left him he can still work and in his work forget his woe, for a portion of the day at least. But take away from him the respect of men and he has no career, no life. He is but the shadow of a man—a hapless, blighted wretch whose true place is underground, and not amongst the men and women whom he cannot look honestly in the face."

"But——"

"I am thinking of an extreme case. Perhaps you did not mean positive disgrace. Such does not come often to a man from a woman; it is more apt to come to a woman from a man."

"Yet there have been instances," she ventured.

"Yes," he concurred, "there have been instances."

A short silence followed these words. Both seemed oppressed by an incommunicable sense of danger in the air.

"I do not know which to pity the most," she murmured at last; "the man who has lost so much by a woman, or the woman who has caused the man she loves to lose so much. I think her pain must be the keener."

He shook his head.

"A woman who could commit a disgraceful act would not be apt to be hyper-sensitive about its effect upon her husband."

"I do not know. There are acts which do not seem disgraceful at the time, yet which may lead to shame. Were a woman to commit such, and were it that woman's fortune to be married——"

"One must pity her husband," he interposed.

She looked up, met his gaze and drew herself back into her old place by his side.

"You spoke of an extreme case just now," she softly whispered. "Let us put it at its extremest. Say that *I* had done an act which if known would brand me with infamy; that you became aware of it, and also knew that the heart which prompted it was not bad, only untutored and impetuous; would your love be so slight that it would give way under the revelation, or would it hold firm, and, though changed, remain to solace and encourage one who—who—never realized——" Her voice sank into an unintelligible murmur, her eyes which were fixed on his turned glassy, for his brow had grown threatening and his regard stern.

"Genevieve," he cried, "these are not the questions of an excited fancy. There is meaning back of all this. What meaning? Is there disgrace lurking in the air for *us?* Have you done anything——"

But here her laugh broke out merrily and shrill. A transformation seemed to be worked in her which made his words sound incongruous and absurd. He stopped in his turn and looked at her in a sort of cloudy amazement. She rose and made him a mocking little courtesy; then she suddenly grew grave.

"Forgive me," she entreated. "I had a notion to test the extent of your love. I—I think there is yet opportunity for it to deepen and broaden. But perhaps I do not understand men I have never cared to study them until now. I did

not know my happiness would hang upon your regard. *Your* regard," she repeated, "not the world's, Walter."

Fondly he surveyed her. There was music in her words; there was truth in the passion that informed them. So should a woman love, and such a woman most of all. He could have kissed the hem of her robe as she sat there, but he contented himself with a look.

"I am afraid," she softly resumed, "that I have had many false notions. Kept to a petty round of thoughts and feelings, I have seen too little of real human life to realize all that there is in it. The outside glitter of things is all that I have hitherto noted. I forgot to look beneath the surface for the real thing. I took no account of such simple matters as a man's pride in his own career, a woman's yearning after the perfect trust and respect of her husband. I was a child, or, worse, I was a soul asleep, and only now am I really awake, and realize what is required of a woman when she loves and is loved. But I know now, and am at once happy and miserable, triumphant and overwhelmed. Am I raving, Walter? I have kept so much pent up in my heart that I may go too far in my relief at speaking. Do you mind my talking so freely? Shall I stop and be proper again—and melancholy?"

"Do not be melancholy," he began——

But there seemed little danger of this. She was all smiles and her dimples came and went with every breath. "Kiss me!" she suddenly cried, lifting up a face so bewitching in its mixture of appeal and audacity, that he could scarcely be blamed for forgetting all that had gone before, in his satisfaction at the present.

"That antidote I am willing to administer *ad libitum*," he smiled; "only you must promise me——"

"Not to ask any more questions?" she finished. "I will; and if trouble comes——"

She stopped with a start. The door-bell had rung.

The doctor woke as from a dream.

"Visitors or patients?" he queried.

"It evidently was the latter; for just then the front door was opened, and a gentleman came in, followed by a decently-dressed woman, who no sooner found herself in the luxurious hall than she seemed to shrink together and almost cower past the doors she had to pass on her way to the office.

The doctor wondering at this, moved to follow. But before doing so, he gave his wife one other look and found her so smiling and so radiant, that he did not speak but passed on with lifted brow and a totally satisfied air. As for her she preserved her smile without seeming effort till the curtain had fallen across the doorway leading into the office. But once left entirely alone, she sank back in the seat she had occupied, and for one wild moment seemed to give way to a despair that was none the less deep that it was silent. But she speedily controlled even this token of weakness, and rising, looked again at herself in the glass, and adjuring the enchanting figure that confronted her, said :

"If you *are* beautiful, use that beauty to preserve your happiness. It can be done, and the incentive given you is great enough for anything. *His* peace of mind rests upon your success. Be successful, then, at all hazards, save that of untruth "

She was still glowing with the excitement of the moment, when the doctor's returning step was heard falling heavily on the carpet. Turning, her ardent colour faded rapidly away. The gentleman who accompanied Dr. Cameron was Mr. Gryce.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE RACK.

Her husband's first action did not tend to reassure her. While the detective was making his bow, Dr. Cameron had advanced to the bell, rung it, and informed the servant who came that he was not at home to anyone, visitors or patients. After which, he had closed all the doors and drawn all the curtains. Not till these precautions were taken did he turn to his wife and observe in what he meant to be his natural tone :

"I am informed by Mr. Gryce that some strange facts have come to light in the case of the girl whose name has so often been mentioned in our hearing lately. As they seem to be

such as you alone can explain, I have asked him to address himself to you, as I am confident you can have but one desire, and that is to help forward the cause of justice to the full extent of your ability."

The bow she gave her husband in acquiescence to this suggestion was admirably free from embarrassment. But when she turned to the detective a slight flush was observable on her cheek, which he was not slow in interpreting as a mingled appeal and apology. It seemed to make it a little difficult for him to speak. She saw this and drew her figure up to its full height.

"I have awakened your distrust," said she, "by asserting for truth what you have since found to be false. I acknowledge that I was led into this error by motives which would probably seem trivial to you, but it is an error I do not propose to maintain, and if you have any questions to ask, I will try and answer them with as much truth as if I had never stooped to a prevarication in my life."

"I can demand no more," was the detective's reply. But there was a formality in the assurance that showed it to be that of politeness rather than of conviction. Genevieve began to smell the smoke of a coming conflict and called up all her resources.

"What are the new facts?" she inquired.

Mr. Gryce had seen fine women before, and seen them placed in positions fully as painful as this; but he thought he had never seen one meet it with greater grace and dignity. He was so impressed he showed it, at which a dimple became visible in Genevieve's cheek and she abated just a trifle of her haughty reserve.

"First allow me one question," said he. "You told me at my last interview that when you went downstairs to be married, you left Mildred Farley behind you in your room. Was she well at that time and in good physical condition? It is an important fact for us to know."

Whatever Genevieve had expected she had not expected this. It required a re-adjustment of her ideas and it took a moment to do this.

"You do not wish to answer?" said he.

"I was wondering what your question imported," was her slow reply.

Struck by these words he paused. Was this woman, noble and unapproachable as she seemed, implicated in this matter? Was he doing an unfair thing in making her talk? A glance at her face reassured him. There was no lurking devil there, only perplexity and that unreasonable dread he was accustomed to detect in women when subjected to anything like a police investigation. He decided to come to the point at once.

"Before urging this question," said he, "let me impress upon you that I am here not on an errand of accusation but of search. I want to know if Miss Farley committed suicide or was murdered. Whichever way she died, the deed took place in your room, Mrs. Cameron, and while you were downstairs being married."

It was a startling thing for her to hear, and her hand went to her heart in sudden agitation. Though the movement was a natural one and the agitation pardonable, she seemed instantly to regret this display of feeling. Why? Both her husband and the detective mentally asked this question. Surely no woman could be expected to hear such a statement and remain unmoved.

"How do you know that?" she asked with a tone of incredulity in her voice; "because a scream was heard at the time?"

"Not exactly; if you will excuse me a minute, I will show you how I came to know it." And Mr. Gryce, stepping quickly across the floor, raised the curtain that communicated with the office and beckoned towards him the woman who had come with him to the house.

Genevieve watched him as if fascinated, forgetting even to bestow a look upon her husband, though she must have felt that the surprise and suspense into which she had been plunged, must have seized upon him too and with even superior force. "What is this man about to do?" her glance seemed to inquire. "What woman is this he is going to bring forward?" Nor did her expression alter when the girl crossed the threshold and she saw her face to face. All was wonderment with her as yet, and intense question. The detective noted this and made haste to remark:

"You know this girl."

Genevieve at once assumed her most disdainful air.

"What is she doing here?" she inquired.

"I—I don't know," came in a confused stammer from the woman's own lips. "This gentlemans tell me to come, and say you will be good to me. I know, ma'am, you do not like me. I didn't want to tell anything to anybody. But what I see I see, and the gentlemans found it out and ask me some more and then I tell him everything."

"What is she talking about?" cried Genevieve, dropping her air of wonder and assuming that of cold severity. "Let her speak plainer if she has anything to say. I do not understand these allusions."

The detective looked at the woman.

"Tell your story," he commanded with a quick gesture.

Whereupon the woman glanced round her a little sheepishly.

"I am sure I didn't think what it would all come to," she began, lifting her eyes for a moment to Genevieve's face and instantly dropping them. "It's wrong, I know, but I was always looking in through key-holes and listening. Most of all I wanted to find out about the girl you let come so often to your room when you let nobody else come. I wanted to know so much that I used to stay longer in the room than you wanted me to, just to see if she would take off her veil. And when you caught me that time looking over your shoulder, I was only trying to find out if you was writing to this girl. It didn't seem right, but none of it was right. She was a dress-maker, and ladies like you don't put up with dress-makers' girls, keeping them in their room all alone for hours. I can't tell why I did what I did. I only want to say how it was I came back after you send me away, ma'am, just to see if you was married all right, and if that girl was let come into your room at last, as she was all along."

"All of which means," the detective here dryly interposed, "that she was in the house unknown to any one but the servants, on the evening, and at the time you were married."

"Ah," Genevieve's cold, curling lip seemed to say.

"She did come, ma'am, that you know, and when I saw her go up, I got so mad I sat down on the back stairs and cried. Then I got awful mad—" Celia was not looking at her old mistress or she might have found it difficult to proceed,—"and when I heard you all go down I just ran up to see if

she was left to look over the rail, at the people below, because I didn't see why you wouldn't let her do that when you have done so much for her before."

"You mean," again broke in Mr. Gryce's cool voice, "that you thought it a good opportunity to steal a sight of her face."

A red flush answered him. "I thought so, but I didn't see it, for she wasn't in the hall; and then I wondered what she could be doing shut up in that big room when she could be seeing all the people down stairs. Then I feel I must go in. You see I tell the truth, ma'am, for all you'll not like me again any more. And when I found the door locked I couldn't think of anything but how to see into that room and what that girl was doing all by herself. So I went to the room next by yours. I got out of the window on to the roof and tried to look into the window what is in the alcove——"

"Why do you stop?"

Was it Genevieve speaking? Even her husband did not know her voice.

As Celia had only stopped for breath, she looked at the lady with eyes of wonder; then went on as if no interruption had occurred.

"For I saw from the street that your shade was a little up, so that I could look in. When I tried to look I could not see the girl, and I got mad, and then because the window was not locked, I pushed it up and looked in and couldn't see her yet, and I couldn't hear her too. Then I got in the window and walked in the room. She wasn't there."

Celia paused. Did she realize that she had reached a dramatic climax? I think not. She was only feeling a little uncomfortable; for Mrs. Cameron's eyes were fairly burning now upon her face, in a way the most callous of mortals must have felt.

"Not there," she repeated, shifting her gaze and looking somewhat uncomfortable. "And I was so much afraid I felt faint-like, and ran to get out of the room. But the door was locked. Then I went to the alcove window, and there I got an awful fright—O awful. For right there by me on the floor where a lot of dresses lay, there was a hand sticking out, and it was white and cold, and—Oh!"

She gave a little scream and turned pale at the recollec-

tion, while Mrs. Cameron half rose to her feet and then sat down, inert and stricken, finding it difficult for a moment to breathe, such terror seemed to pass over her at the picture and circumstance thus presented to her.

Her husband, who had been seized with a shudder too, walked straight up to the detective.

"This is an incredible tale," cried he; "have you reason to believe it is a true one?"

"Let us hear it out," was the calm response. "Afterwards we will talk." And he motioned to the woman to finish her story.

"I hear that some people say that an awful, dreadful scream was heard when the wedding was downstairs. It must have been a dreadful scream. I was alone, with that dead hand pointing at me. I was so much afraid that I got stiff, and I did not know what I must do. All I think then was that I must go away and say nothing to somebody about the hand for I know I had no right in your room, and if I got into trouble nobody in the house would help me out. But I was awful afraid because I got to step over that body if I got out of the window. When I was again in the hall I was fainting right by your door. But I didn't. I went downstairs, got out of the house, and nobody saw me. And I ran all the way home, and didn't say a word for a long time. And how that gentleman found out that I have seen the dead woman in your room——"

"That will do," quietly put in the detective. "You have heard this girl's story," he now declared, turning to Mrs. Cameron with a polite bow. "Are there any questions you would like to ask her?"

The great lady stirred, looked as if she had awakened from some terrible nightmare, and murmured, "No."

"She can be dismissed then?"

"Yes."

Mr. Gryce bowed again, and addressed himself to the doctor.

"Will you be good enough to see that she is suitably disposed of while we have a few more words on the subject?"

It was courteously said, but the doctor, and his wife too, flushed with suppressed indignation, for it was apparent from these words that he did not feel sufficient confidence in them

to leave them alone together while he crossed the room. But sharp as were the feelings thus aroused, they did not interfere with the doctor's complying with his visitor's request; and Celia was conducted across the room, and shut up in the doctor's office with as much care and deliberation as if there was no tumult in his soul, and not a nerve of his proud nature had been disturbed.

In the interval not a word was uttered, not a look interchanged between the lady and the detective. But the moment Dr. Cameron returned, a sudden change took place in Mrs. Cameron, and rising, she confronted Mr. Gryce with a frank and grateful air that lent quite a new aspect to her ever-changing countenance.

"You are very kind," she declared, in a grateful tone that was in itself a shock to both her hearers. "Knowing this frightful tale; seeing as you must have done that, if true, Mildred Farley did not die after I went downstairs, but before, you have come here in confidence and without scandal to hear what I have to say about the matter, and give me an opportunity to explain myself. I shall never forget this consideration, sir; and as a proof of my gratitude I will at once tell you what I can about this poor unfortunate's death, hoping that you will see the matter as I did, and understand, in a measure at least, how I was driven by my fears to keep back my knowledge of this frightful secret, even from my mother and husband, till it was torn from me shred by shred as you have seen. And now for the truth. This girl, whose death you consider such a mystery, committed suicide. She committed it in my presence just a few minutes before I went downstairs to be married. It was a terrible shock and a great surprise to me. I had been dressing, and was thinking of anything else than tragedies or death. Nor do I think she meant to die then or there. But she was desperate. She had had a talk with her intended husband and had been disappointed in him. She did not want to see him again, and the contrast between the hopes expressed by my bridal attire and the dreariness of her own outlook maddened her, I supposed; for in a moment as it were, she seized upon that bottle of poison and turned it up to her lips, and the deed was done, and she was dead before I had got over the terror which held me breathless and immovable at her

side. I was in my bridal dress and veil, sir. The ceremony had already been delayed, and I was momentarily expecting the summons to descend. Should I mar the happiness of the whole company by revealing what had occurred? I thought not in the moment I had to consider. So I just drew the poor girl into the alcove, and in grief and terror enough, God knows, covered her over with some dresses I had before pulled down from the closet and thrown on the floor. I had barely done this and readjusted my veil when the knock came and I had to descend.

"It was frightful, but I did not know how frightful till I came to think. Then I almost gave way to my terror and agitation, and when that scream came down from upstairs——"

She stopped. They did not wonder; at such a horrible experience, who would not shudder?

Her husband for the first time realized all she had been through, and reached out his hand in sympathy, though there was yet much to be explained before he could feel reconciled to a past so full of mysteries and shadows.

"And how?" asked the detective, with nothing but formal respect on his part, "was the body disposed of? When next we hear of it, it was in the keeping of a Dr. Molesworth, who, as we have been informed, was not one of your wedding-guests."

Mrs. Cameron did not flinch. She looked, if anything, more winning and candid than before.

"Dr. Molesworth was the man who had expected to marry her. He had gone to the hotel for that purpose and had not found her; so he came where he suspected her to be. He was not one of my guests, but that did not keep him from the house. He came in at the front door and stood in the hall, and I happened to see him and immediately knew what he was after. So I rose and went out—I was then receiving congratulations—and accosting him without delay, told him that the person he wanted was in my room and bade him go upstairs and I would follow. For I not only saw that he was in a state of feeling that bordered on frenzy, but I also saw that if the matter was to be hushed up and the body got out of the house without disturbance, he was the man to do it; and I relied on him and went up after him and explained

what had occurred and showed him the dead body of his bride and asked for help and got it. I don't know that I should call it help now," she added, in a low voice; "for it might have been better for me if I had called in the whole house to see that dead girl, and so escaped the days and weeks of deceit that have pressed upon me like so many mountain weights of lead."

Her husband looked as if he concurred with her, but he said nothing, and Mr. Gryce asked another question.

"You read the account of the proceedings before the coroner, which was printed in the papers?"

She acknowledged that she had.

"You must have seen then that Dr. Molesworth testified to having found the girl on a stoop in Twenty-second Street?"

"Yes, sir. It was agreed between us that he should tell some such story as that. It seemed wisest to us at the time. Since she had killed herself it would not hurt her and it would relieve me from endless complication, to have it thought she had committed the deed in the street. So we thought then; with how little judgment let this moment itself testify."

The detective fixed his eyes upon her, and opened his lips to put another question. But he evidently found it too difficult to say what was in his mind, and turned it into the simple suggestion, "You must have known Dr. Molesworth well, Mrs. Cameron?"

A flush, hot and vivid, answered him from the doctor's face, but her cheek did not alter and it was with much composure she replied,—

"I had learned much of his disposition from my conversations with the woman he expected to marry. As for his face, I had seen him at Mrs. Olney's where I have been more than once. I had even had some talk with him. It was the situation which made us like friends at once."

"I understand," asserted Mr. Gryce, but his looks did not bear out his words. "Your conduct is not so inexplicable," he went on; "women think much of appearances and are not apt to weigh the consequences of their impulsive efforts to preserve them. But a man usually halts long before he enters into a scheme that must end in perjury; and Dr. Molesworth committed perjury, Mrs. Cameron."

She dropped her chin upon her breast, and the presence of a growing dread began to show itself in her face.

"Not only that," the detective continued. "He engaged to do a fearful thing when he promised you to get a dead body out of the house alone and without discovery. Have you thought how much nerve and determination it would require? What self-sacrificing devotion it would need to lead a man not only to take the risk of such an act but to subject himself to the horrors of it? I find it difficult to reconcile what I have seen of Dr. Molesworth with such devotion to a lady so little known to him. I would sooner think——" He paused; she looked at him breathlessly—"that he had his own reasons for keeping the matter quiet," he pointedly added.

"Perhaps he had," she simply replied. "I cannot tell all that passed in his mind. I can only tell you what we did."

"And you repeat that it was through his agency this dead girl was got out of your room and house?"

"Yes, sir."

"*Alone?*"

"Yes, sir."

"And when?"

"That I do not know. It was after I left."

"What, you went away before she was removed from the house?"

"Yes, sir. Having made up my mind to trust the whole affair to him, I only thought of escape for myself. Then it could never have been managed if I had not cleared the back-stairs by having my trunk carried out. It was down those he intended to go."

"And did he?"

"I cannot tell. I only know he succeeded in his undertaking. How, or under what difficulties, he must himself inform you. I have never had an opportunity to ask him."

"And do you think he will tell me?"

"No," she returned, boldly; "not while he doubts whether I have spoken of the matter or not. He has too chivalrous an idea of duty."

"What, when his life is at stake?"

"His life!"

"He was on the point of being arrested for murder when this testimony of Celia's came in."

"I suspected it, or rather I knew that he was under the surveillance of the police; for he told us so in an interview he had with the doctor about a case of his."

"And you were going to allow him to go to prison upon a charge you knew perfectly unfounded?"

"Mr. Gryce, I was but two weeks married. I knew that my husband hated deceit, and I lacked the courage to acknowledge that I had become entangled in it. Then I trusted to Dr. Molesworth discovering a way out of his difficulty, and was so sure that he would, I never even thought of his being in any danger of his life. It is also only fair to myself to say, that had he been brought to trial, I should have relentlessly sacrificed myself. It was my hope that he would not, which kept me silent so long."

She was pleading her cause well, and yet her shadowed brow and paling lip showed she was conscious that it was a failing one, and that the doom she had so long dreaded was rushing upon her.

"I accept your explanations," quoth the detective, "and it only remains at present for you to inform us where Miss Farley got the drug with which she poisoned herself."

"I cannot tell you that," came in fainter tones from Mrs. Cameron's lips.

"Was it from her bag, her pocket, or the folds of her dress that she took the phial which held it?"

Genevieve miserably shook her head.

Mr. Gryce looked troubled; he hesitated a little, then suggested kindly, "You saw her carry it to her lips?"

Genevieve faintly acquiesced.

"And did you not see where she took it from?"

"I cannot answer."

Dr. Cameron strode one step and stood beside his wife.

"Why cannot you answer?" he asked, gently.

"Because—" she felt for a chair and sat down. "Because you will not believe what I say."

"*I* will not believe what you say?"

She turned her eyes, which had been fixed upon vacancy, on his face. There was unfathomable love in them, but there was unfathomable despair also.

"I think you would," said she, "and yet it is very incredible."

"The true things are often the incredible," observed he.

She smiled, but in a hopeless sort of way, and in an altered tone murmured:

"Very well, then; she got it out of a box."

"A box she carried?"

"No; one she found in the room."

Dr. Cameron stared; so did the detective. Genevieve sat and shivered silently.

"Took a phial containing prussic acid from a box she found in the room?"

"Yes."

"And how came prussic acid to be in your room, Mrs. Cameron?"

It was a question for which she seemingly had no reply. Though she opened her lips, no words issued from them, and she sat the image of shame and despair. The doctor, struck aghast, started impetuously forward, and would have spoken himself but that the detective forestalled him.

"You do not think I have the right to ask that question?" he remarked. "Well, I withdraw it, and will simply inquire what sort of a box it was which held this phial, and where in the room it was kept?"

This time the answer came, but in quivering tones that were almost inaudible.

"The box was a jewel casket, and it was kept in the top drawer of the bureau."

If surprised, Mr. Gryce did not show it.

"I see," he remarked; "and being a receptacle for valuables it was doubtless locked and the bureau drawer also?"

"I don't know. I don't remember about the bureau drawer; but the box was locked. I recollect seeing her turn the key."

It was a fatal admission, and at once stamped her whole story as improbable. She saw it when it was too late, and turning to a ghastly white before their eyes, swayed so that her husband forgot to press the question still trembling on his lips.

The detective was not so merciful.

"I beg your pardon," said he, "but this fact you mention is so remarkable, when you consider that the person thus accused by you of opening your drawers and ransacking its

treasures before your eyes was at the most a humble dress-maker, that I cannot refrain from asking what excuse she gave you for such presumptuous conduct?"

Making one final effort, Mrs. Cameron hastily replied. "She gave no excuse. It was all done so quickly, she neither thought of speaking nor I of questioning?"

"But her knowledge of things! How came she——"

But here the doctor seeing from his wife's condition that he must speak at once or not at all, hurriedly interposed with the ejaculation:

"Genevieve, Genevieve, answer me this. Was it the bottle of prussic acid I had given you for——"

It was useless to continue. A great spot of vivid red had broken out on either of her cheeks, and she seemed neither to hear nor notice.

"I am ill, Walter, I am ill!" came from her lips in a broken murmur; and next moment she had fallen in a heap at his feet.

CHAPTER XXI.

DR. CAMERON ANNOUNCES HIS DETERMINATION.

A DAY passed; a solemn day to Dr. Cameron, who in it saw his wife brought very near to the verge of the grave. She was still so ill that they walked with hushed steps and bated breath through the house; but the worst was over, and Dr. Cameron felt that he could leave her long enough to keep an appointment he had made with Mr. Gryce. For mingled with all the anxiety of the last twenty-four hours was the uncertainty called out by her last admission; and he felt that this must be set at rest as soon as possible. He knew it could be. He not only remembered perfectly well the circumstances under which he gave Genevieve this powerful medicine, but he also remembered a certain peculiarity of the phial which held it. To be sure that phial was broken; but for all that, he was confident he would know it again if that portion of the neck which held the stopper was still intact. For there had

been a nick in its rim, the very shape of which he recollected, and if that nick were still there he would need no label to identify the bottle. The label had once had the word POISON on it, and the most minute directions for taking the requisite quantity. But the label had been rubbed off of the one broken in Twenty-second Street, probably for the sake of severing any clue it might furnish; the phial having come from his own office, and the words on the label having been written by his own hand.

Mr. Gryce was prepared to receive him. He had a great respect for Dr. Cameron, and at present a profound pity. A noble husband and an incomprehensible wife. That is the way he put it to himself at present. In the future he might be obliged to put it stronger. His greeting therefore was cordial but very grave. Dr. Cameron noticed this, and came at once to the point.

"Have you those pieces of broken glass here which are supposed to represent the phial out of which Mildred Farley drank the poison that killed her?"

"We have. Do you want to see them?"

"I should like to; that is if you consider it of any moment to know whether it is the same bottle of acid I gave my wife before we were married."

"I certainly do. I should consider that we had got hold of a most important fact if we could establish an identity between the bottles."

"Very well, then, look at the pieces you have preserved, and see if you can find the neck of the phial amongst them; then look on that neck for a nick about the size of a pin's head, and if you find it——"

"Is that it?"

"Yes," assented the other, simply.

"It is a serious discovery," observed the detective, "*very* serious."

If he had meant to alarm Dr. Cameron, he certainly succeeded.

"How, serious?" repeated that gentleman. "It is important, as all links are, and valuable as establishing the truth of my wife's testimony, but *serious* ——"

Why did the detective remain silent? Did he own a thought or a suspicion he was fain to conceal? Dr. Cameron felt his

heart stand still. Could it be they did not believe his wife? that he had roused rather than allayed whatever doubts they cherished? He leaned forward and forced the detective to look at him.

"I am an unhappy man," he declared. "I have a wife whose testimony you doubt, and that wife is laid up with almost a mortal sickness. What shall I do to prove my trust in her word? It is absolute, I assure you—so absolute that if ten persons told me they saw her give the poison to Mildred Farley, and she told me that Mildred Farley took it out of her jewel-casket or any other mysterious place, I would believe my wife and not them, and this without doubt or hesitation."

Mr. Gryce's eyes fell, and he nodded thoughtfully to himself. It was evidently hard for him to continue a conversation that must inflict such bitter humiliation upon a man he regarded so favourably.

"You speak of your wife's testimony," he remarked at last. "Can you venture upon a guess as to when she will be in condition to take up this subject again?"

"It will be weeks," was the grave response. "I pray God it may not be months. But for any facts about her health and the possibility of getting lucid and reliable answers from her to any questions you might put, I must refer you to Dr. Weston. I have called him in in consultation, and upon his unprejudiced judgment I beg you to rely. I wish too strongly that the subject might never be re-opened, for me to be the adviser you want."

Mr. Gryce looked more and more embarrassed.

"If I can make it accord with my duty to leave you and your sick wife at peace, be sure I will do it. Nothing would give me greater pleasure, for you have my unbounded esteem and sympathy." But he did not look as if his duty and wishes agreed, and Dr. Cameron lost heart more and more.

"You think," he remarked, "that there is something fatal in the identification of this bottle with the one I gave to Miss Gretorex months ago."

"I think," slowly observed Mr. Gryce, "that it is a great pity that Mrs. Cameron did not preserve her strength long enough to explain how this poor sewing-girl, albeit her constant visitor, had the presumption as well as a sufficient knowledge of the interior of her bureau drawers, to seize with such

an instantaneous touch upon the one thing that would do the deadly business she desired."

Ah! so that was the point that troubled him. It was a mercy to know it. Dr. Cameron cast a glance of gratitude at the speaker, which the old man probably saw though he gave no token of it.

"My wife may not have been able to explain it," the former now ventured, with an appearance of ease he was far from feeling. "She herself spoke of the fact as incredible."

"I know," the detective's bow seemed to say.

"Have you talked to Molesworth? Has he been told that Mrs. Cameron has contradicted his version of the affair, and acknowledged that the girl died before ever he came to the house?"

"That is something we are not ready to confide to you, Dr. Cameron. Till your wife is able to make clear to us one or two further mysteries concerning this affair, we must look upon her as a possible witness"—he did not say suspected person—"and this being the case, we are not at liberty to take her husband into our confidence."

"Then," rejoined Dr. Cameron, glowing, "her husband will take you into his confidence. Mr. Gryce, I love my wife. How deeply and how entirely I never knew till I saw the shadow of death creeping over her. I must therefore save her, for I see that incalculable suffering, if not irreparable disgrace, lies before her if I cannot make it apparent in some way that the story she told you of Mildred Farley's unhappy end is absolutely true. What will do it? for I am sure something can and something will. Tell me, then, what will it take to satisfy you of her innocence. For though you do not say it, I see that you think she was the one who took the phial from her jewel-casket."

"Dr. Cameron," was the quick reply, "the strongest proof of your wife's innocence, as you yourself phrase it, is the lack of any apparent motive on her part to wish ill to the girl. Make that apparent lack an undoubted one, and we must believe her story, preposterous and unnatural as it seems. In other words, unravel the whole secret of their connection. Prove that Mildred Farley had cause sufficient for desiring death, and make the conduct of Julius Molesworth seem in accord with the spirit and good judgment of the man."

"I will do it," came from Dr. Cameron's white lips. "I can learn nothing that will give me the pain which your suspicion has done."

"And if, in doing this, you come across others working in the same field?"

"I can but acknowledge their superior right there. I am but working from love, you from official duty. I have neither the facilities nor perhaps the courage to vie with you." And with a bow of formal politeness he took a hurried leave.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MYSTERIOUS ROLL.

Dr. Cameron may have been rash in the making of these promises, but once having made them he meant to keep them. The sight of his wife's pale face, staring blankly from the almost unruffled pillow where it lay, would have strengthened his determination even if it had weakened. It brought back so many memories which made her unresponsive glance almost unendurable to bear. If he could but see it beam again with pleasure! If at the first dawn of intelligence in that blank eye, he might lean over her and whisper, "Joy, joy, my darling. All that troubled you is vanished and gone into nothing. Not a soul in the world has anything against you. Awake to peace and hope and love!" That would be a moment worth living for. For this he would strive while she lay here in unconsciousness.

But between hope and fulfilment there is a great gulf. As he withdrew from her side and sat down in her *boudoir* to think, he asked himself if he possessed any secret knowledge likely to lead to an elucidation of the problem he had set himself. He thought he did. There was a fact that had once attracted his attention and then been forgotten again till this new danger threatening Genevieve had roused all his faculties and awakened all his memories. It was this. At the moment, now some weeks gone by, when Mr. Gryce and himself stood

peering through the curtain at the hotel, he had noticed lying on the table at which Mildred Farley had been writing, a pile of manuscript, or rather a number of closely written sheets of paper, tied into a small roll. It had not seemed important at the time and he had not given it a second thought. But now, in recalling it, the realization came with great force that those sheets might have been letters; and that letters held and cherished by her at such an hour, must contain facts relative to her love and life that it would be of inestimable value to him now to learn. Where was that roll? It had not been found in her bag, or mention would have been made of it at the inquest. Had it been destroyed, or was it still in existence? It was certainly his first duty to inquire.

But of whom? Mr. Gryce? That would not do. Though Dr. Cameron felt every confidence in the detective's integrity, it had become his ambition to refute that detective's suspicions, and how could he hope to do so if he gave away the one clue which he imagined he possessed to a different conclusion from that which present circumstances forced upon the police? That he could always fall back upon the detective's knowledge was his excuse for attempting to take the first steps without it. Besides, Mr. Gryce might not know any more about the matter than he.

The packet might have been removed from the table before that gentleman took his place at the curtain, and if so, the probabilities were that he did not even know of its existence.

"Let me see," quoth Dr. Cameron to himself, "if I can transfer myself back into that alcove-room and into the presence of that despairing girl." And he dropped his head forward on his hands, shutting out to the best of his ability all sight and consciousness of surrounding objects. "It was a picture not soon to be forgotten. Let me see if I can recall it." And he bent his mind upon that departed scene and soon beheld rising before him in distinct detail, the large, stiffly-furnished room, with its one occupant kneeling on the lonely hearth, watching with tearless but most miserable gaze, the burning of a single sheet of paper. "A single sheet," he repeated to himself, "like the roll, but not part of it. For that was tied up with a tiny blue ribbon and lay apart and by itself on a table some few feet away. Had she been burning

the roll the circumstances would surely have been different. She would have held it in her hand or the ribbon would at least have been untied and the sheets laid ready to her reach. No, the paper she burned was a draft of the note she afterwards left for Dr. Molesworth, and though the recollection was a dim one, he felt quite certain he had also observed a folded paper laying beside the rolled ones. Of the ink-bottle and pen he retained a decided impression; and he even remembered how the pen lay half on and half off the table, as if it had rolled thus far and stopped.

But the roll, the roll! What had she done with it? Burned it afterwards? There was no proof of this. There had been plenty of testimony as to the finding of the one charred bit of paper he had seen blazing on the hearth, but none as to the discovery of the much greater quantity which the destruction of the roll would have occasioned. How then had she disposed of it? He tried to put himself in Mildred Farley's place and see; tried to realize what she would do if these letters were what he imagined them to be—tokens of affection from the man she no longer desired to marry. She would not leave them behind her to be returned to him by careless and possibly inquisitive hands. They were too sacred for that, possibly too precious. Since she had not had the courage to return him these compromising sheets at the moment he had displeased her, she would take them with her and keep them till time and opportunity came for disposing of them with propriety. She had accordingly put them into her bag; and since, from a nice calculation of time and distance, he had already satisfied himself that she must have gone without any delay up-town, he concluded that she had carried them into Mrs. Gretorex's house. But had they gone out with her? That it was not so easy to determine; for let alone the possible interference of Mr. Gryce, the purpose and determination of Dr. Molesworth showed him perfectly capable of opening her bag and taking out these papers either before leaving the house or during that hideous ride he took with her dead body. But if he had not meddled with them, and Mr. Gryce was ignorant of the fact of their existence, where in Mrs. Gretorex's house would he find them? Why in Genevieve's room of course? And where in Genevieve's room?

As he asked himself this question, he raised his head and

unconciously glanced about. As he did so his eyes fell on a certain chintz-covered sofa that filled one corner of the apartment in which he sat; and remembering that it was the one article which Genevieve had requested to have brought over from her old home, he rose hurriedly and approached it. It was old, it was ugly, it was uncomfortable; he had never seen her lie or even sit on it, and yet she had not been easy till it was brought into the house and established in this *bijou* room, where each and every object surrounding it was a work of the highest art and greatest expense. There must be a reason for this interest in so incongruous an article. Could it be——? He did not complete his thought, but rapidly stooped and ran his hand around the seat. He stopped suddenly. He had touched something smooth and firm and round. It was a roll of paper, and the moment he drew it out he recognized it for the one he was in search of, by the look of the writing upon it and the small thread of blue ribbon that surrounded it.

It was one of those cases where perverse or illogical reasoning still brings one directly to a definite issue. There had been a dozen contingencies against the hope that he would find that roll still in existence, and in a spot available to him, yet they had all gone for nothing, and the one line of argument he had allowed himself to pursue had brought him straight to the object he was seeking. It does not happen often, but it happened in this case and he accepted the result with gratitude.

But before pursuing the matter further; before even undoing the roll he held in his hand he went in to look at his wife again, for he was not easy long away from her side, and though the minutes had been few since he had seen her, an occurrence of such importance had taken place that it seemed as if hours instead of minutes had elapsed.

He found her lying just the same, only her hand had found its way outside the coverlid, where it lay, white and still as moulded wax. He felt an infinite tenderness as he saw it, and stooping, imprinted a kiss upon it with a sensation of tears that was new in the life of this hitherto free and self-reliant nature. Had she seen his look and felt that kiss would the shadows have lain so thick upon her eyes, and the mist of her unconsciousness been so heavy?

When he returned he closed the doors between, and took up the roll. About to pierce the secrets of another soul, he had a moment of recoil. But an instant memory of his purpose gave him the hardihood he required, and tearing off the simple blue ribbon that held the sheets together, he smoothed them out before him, and took his first glance. Great heaven! this was no man's writing; nor was it such as he would expect from the woman he believed Mildred Farley to be. It was——He stopped with a gasp, looked around him to see that he had not lost control of his reason, then glanced back. The effect upon him was the same. If it was not his own wife's writing it was so like it——Jumping up, he procured the two or three notes she had written him before they were married and compared them with the lines lying before him. Chirography was identical. The words he was destined to read were Genevieve's! written to whom, and for what? That was the secret it had now become his duty to penetrate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GLIMPSES OF A BURIED HISTORY.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Gryce was engaged upon quite a different search. Convinced by Mrs. Cameron's evasions and by the ravaging effects of his examination upon her, that a murder and not a suicide had taken place in Genevieve Gretorex's room, he found it had become his duty to discover what motive this petted child of fortune could have had for desiring the death of so humble a person as her dress-maker, as it had become that of the doctor to establish the sufficiency of Mildred Farley's own despair for the tragedy which terminated her existence.

He went, therefore, to work upon this matter with his usual vigour and precision, his method of procedure having one point in similarity with that of Dr. Cameron. This was that it started with a fact of which he had spoken to no one, and which dated back to the moment when Mrs. Gretorex

first heard from his lips that her daughter had been interested in a person by the name of Farley.

That name—he was sure of it—had awakened memories in the elder woman's breast which were connected with some secret she sought to hide, and which it disturbed her to think had been discovered by her daughter. Whatever that secret was, whether of honour or dishonour, happiness or unhappiness, it was evidently one that he ought to make his own; for upon these old family secrets, present crimes often hang, like the final link upon the end of a rusty chain.

That it was not one of ordinary relationship he had already made sure. For, incited by the remarkable likeness between these girls, he had probed into the connections of the Gretorex family and so satisfied himself that there were no Farleys among its poor relations. That there was nevertheless some connection between them, acknowledged or unacknowledged, his instincts and the whole bearing of Mrs. Gretorex on that memorable day relentlessly told him; and to determine what this was and to set these girls before the world in their true relations to each other, seemed to him the first step towards a correct understanding of the tragedy which had occurred.

In laying his plan of action, the first conclusion he came to was that it was useless to question Mrs. Gretorex. She was armed at all points and distrusted him as an inquisitor. Unless he could make it seem to her advantage or that of her daughter's, to talk, she would simply present a polished surface to all his darts of inquiry, and thus lead him to reveal his own purposes without eliciting a particle of truth from her. To other sources of knowledge than this, he must therefore turn, and the first person he thought of was Mr. Gretorex.

This gentleman, of whom we have seen but little, was socially considered *the husband of Mrs. Gretorex.* But amongst men he was an acknowledged power, and in business circles a leader and a demagogue. It was he who had made the enormous means which gave them rank with the most influential families in town, and it was owing to his good sense that their fine position had never suffered eclipse during all the vicissitudes of the last twenty years. To him, then, Mr. Gryce decided to address himself, and the time he took was

the morning of the day immediately following his interview with Dr. Cameron.

He found the great railroad-man in his office and he introduced himself simply for what he was, a detective from the police force. Then he at once opened his business by saying,—

"You may have heard of me, Mr. Gretorex. I was at your house the evening your daughter was married, and I have been there since. My object——" He waited a moment; but polite amazement was all that the countenance of Mr. Gretorex expressed. "My object," resumed Mr. Gryce, "to learn what I could concerning the Miss Farley which your daughter has been so liberally patronizing."

Mr. Gretorex's look of polite astonishment gave way to one of equally polite inquiry. "Miss Farley," he repeated, and there paused. The name seemed to awaken no emotion in him.

"Yes, the girl who was poisoned a few weeks ago; you surely have heard your wife speak of her?"

The busy man shook his head, and glanced at the papers on his desk.

"I have not much time," he remarked, "for trivialities. If Mrs. Gretorex knows anything about this person she is the one to go to. I am in possession of no information on the subject."

"I am glad to hear this," quoth the detective, boldly, "for I was afraid this Mildred Farley was in some way connected with your family."

Mr. Gretorex stopped the restless drumming of his fingers on the table, and stared with honest amazement at the unmoved detective.

"It is a name I never heard before," he observed, drily, and turned to his papers again.

Mr. Gryce knew men—he never boasted that he knew women—and in this man he saw abundant vitality, purpose, and ambition, but no duplicity. He therefore rose, and with suitable excuses bowed himself out, convinced that whatever secret lay concealed beneath the emotion of Mrs. Gretorex at the mention of the name of Farley, it was not one in which her husband had any share.

Disappointed, but not discouraged, he asked himself what

clue he should follow next; and the answer came, that since the thread had broken in his hand, so far as the Gretorex family was concerned, he would now try and see if he could not trace the connection he sought from the Farley end of the chain. For though both Mrs. Farley and her daughter were dead, they had left their belongings behind them, and amongst those belongings were undoubtedly packets of old letters, any one of which might give him the information he sought.

To Mrs. Olney's house he therefore repaired, and after some talk with that lady, sat down before the trunk which held the effects of Mildred Farley. But he did not remain there long, for the letters he found were such as he had seen before, and consisted of school-girl notes, interesting enough to the writer perhaps, but of no value to one on the search for any kind of knowledge. Besides, it was not in the letters written to Mildred that he expected to find the clue he was seeking. If the secret he was after was an old one he would be more likely to discover tokens of it in the correspondence of the mother. So he sought out Mrs. Olney again with the question as to where he should look for souvenirs of Mrs. Farley. Whereupon he was directed to an old chest in the attic, which, being emptied, produced more than one packet of just such letters as he desired to see: old letters with discoloured writing, some of them bearing the date of ten years back and some of them twenty. With these in his hand he felt that he held the key to the widow's history, and going back into the room provided for his use by the accommodating landlady, he set about perusing them with all the care and circumspection of which he was capable.

They were from various persons, most of them women, and it was not long before he discovered that those signed with the name of Annie showed the most familiarity with the widow's affairs, as well as expressed the most affectionate interest in her. To these, therefore, he paid the most heed, and was soon rewarded for his efforts by gaining a very good idea of Mrs. Farley's early life and circumstances.

They were such as are very apt to follow a runaway match such as hers had evidently been; six months of extreme joy, followed by sickness, poverty, and growing neglect on the part of him who led her into this trouble. A few months later and the sickness had increased and the poverty deepened; then some

blow, dreadful but keen, called out the hurried line, "Oh, my poor darling, bear up till I come; you shall not endure this fearful grief alone!" after which there was a lapse of letter-writing on the part of this person for months, and when it was taken up again the frequent expressions of sympathy for her correspondent's widowhood showed what this grief had probably been; though there were other and less comprehensible allusions to some great sacrifice she had made, which threw an air of mystery over this portion of the correspondence that for some time the detective found it impossible to penetrate. Not till he read in a much later letter, "I hope your sweet little Mildred is well; I wonder if the other one has flourished as rapidly and looks as well," did the light he was seeking break in upon this seemingly common-place history. Then, indeed, he appeared to catch a glimpse of something that might lead him out of the maze his imagination had wrought for itself, and he addressed his attention to the remaining letters of the packet with renewed interest. But beyond a sympathetic word here and there, and some passing expressions of relief that Mrs. Farley had had the courage to resign a part of her burden in order that the rest might be sustained, he found nothing to corroborate his suspicions, till he suddenly stumbled upon these words at the beginning of a letter dated from New York, "I have news for you, I have seen her, and she is as much like Mildred as any little lady brought up in the lap of luxury could be like a child who has not always had two pairs of shoes for her feet. I met her as she was going to school. I was on the side-walk in front of the house, and she passed so near me I could have caught her in my arms. Why didn't I? She would only have thought me crazy, and that wouldn't have done me any harm, while the letting her go by me as if her sweet body did not contain a drop of my blood, did. But her rich dress and the haughty way in which she held her head overawed me, and I did not even follow her down the street, though I own my heart went after her almost as much as if she had been my own child. What grief, what longing must be yours! I appreciate it now that I have seen with my eyes this facsimile of the darling you have retained for your own solace." And this letter was signed *Annie* like the rest, and bore a date of only ten years back.

After this, Mr. Gryce was not astonished to find a change in the direction of the epistles addressed to Mrs. Farley. From being sent to a small town in Ohio they were now inscribed to a certain number in Bleecker Street, New York. The widow had moved herself and child to the great metropolis, and henceforth the letters recognized the fact that a stern conflict was going on in her breast, that, added to her daily struggle for bread, was fast undermining what little health she had.

At last, words of condolence took the place of words of hope, as the two struggles culminated; followed by sudden congratulations that she had found strength in her weakness, and had not only been saved from breaking a most solemn oath, but had found in the child who shared her life and fortunes, a help and comfort that would yet compensate her for all she had lost and suffered.

And then a sudden failure on the part of Annie to write; with hurried lines, manifestly from some other member of this same Annie's household, in which hope was expressed that Mrs. Farley was well, and news given of the invalid, as Annie was henceforth called; winding up with this single injunction in the old handwriting, "Do be careful; Mildred's happiness, as well as that of the other, depends upon keeping things as they are. Remember your oath."

And the packet was exhausted. But what had he not learned? Or, at least, what was he not at liberty to surmise? Procuring the date at which the first mention of Mildred was made, and storing up in his deep memory the name of the town from which came these letters signed "Annie," he left Mrs. Olney, with a sense of great professional complacency, notwithstanding the secret dread which sprang from his benevolent nature, of being upon the track of a crime destined to plunge a beautiful woman and a noble man into a pit of shame and dishonour.

What he did with the facts he now gleaned and what result followed his pursuit of the unknown Annie to her place of residence, I leave him to tell for himself in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EXPLANATIONS.

Dr. Cameron wished to see Mr. Gryce, Mr. Gryce was ready to see Dr. Cameron. The result was that they were closeted together at police head-quarters.

The meeting of the two was peculiar. Each had something to say and the other knew it, but the doctor as well as the detective carefully concealed his impatience, and waited with seeming impassiveness for the other to begin. It was Mr. Gryce who at last broke the silence.

"I have learned a fact," said he, "which I think it is your right to know. It is an unexpected one, and may cause you some chagrin, and may not. It depends upon what affects your pride, and whether in seeking a wife you had any other views than those which could be met by her youth, her beauty and her wealth."

Dr. Cameron smiled bitterly. "If I once possessed what you call pride, it has been somewhat roughly exorcised by the experiences of the last few days. Do not let any fear of wounding my self-esteem stand in your way."

"I only wish to prepare you," explained the detective, "for what will probably prove a surprise. And yet why should I take that for granted; you look like a man who has made his discoveries too."

"My discoveries are not your discoveries," asserted the doctor; "yet why should *I* take that for granted? Because I have learned certain facts in what seems to me a unique way, it does not follow that you have not known them from the first through your detective intuition. But let us not fence with each other in regard to such an important matter. Tell me the result of your labours and I will respond, if necessary, by telling you mine."

"Very good," returned the detective. "You will pardon me if I begin with a question. When you married Miss Gretorex so called——"

"So called?"

"Did you not suppose that you were marrying the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex?"

"Certainly—of course—why——"

"They let you think so? Did not tell you that she was only their child by adoption; beloved by them as their own, and the destined inheritor of their wealth, but not of their blood or lineage any more than this poor Mildred Farley was, let us say, or any other girl you might chance to meet in a walk through Broadway?"

The surprise of the doctor, so great as to almost render him speechless, was his best reply. The detective immediately proceeded.

"Then you were made the victim of a deception," he declared, firmly. "Genevieve Cameron is your wife, but she is not the child of Mr. and Mrs. Philo Gretorex. She was adopted by them when she was a babe, and under such circumstances, and with such secrecy, that the truth has never transpired even among the nearest relatives of the family. Do you wish to hear any particulars of the affair?"

Dr. Cameron rose, walked to the window, threw it up, and took a deep breath of the cool February air; then he came back, a trifle haggard, a trifle wan, but outwardly composed.

"I most certainly do," he returned; "but first reassure me in one regard. My wife——"

He had overrated his strength. That name could not pass his lips without a struggle. He paused and looked imploringly at the detective.

"I understand you," the latter responded. "You wish to know if she were a party to the deception? I would rather not answer you yet. Let me first give you the details of her adoption."

Dr. Cameron drew a deep sigh. These tremendous blows, one after the other, were telling upon him.

"I am listening," he observed; but his eyes had a far-away look, as if they rested upon objects remote from those contained in this barren office. And they were. They were seeing, as in a vision, a calm, sweet profile, outlined against a pillow, upon whose closed lids and immovable mouth, unconsciousness still sat, but sat so lightly that at any hour a change might come and awake this soulless marble into a living woman, with eager yearning in her eyes, and an awful

trepidation in her heart. Was he beginning to dread that hour, and wish *he* might be lying in blissful unconsciousness when it came?

Mr. Gryce, who, as I have said, understood men, perceived this look and remained for a moment silent; then, with softened tone and a quiet air, commenced in his easy, colloquial way to say:—

"Twenty years ago Philo Gretorex was on the road to fortune, but had not yet attained its summit. He was the owner of stock in a railroad which has since made many millionaires, but he was not so rich, nor had he yet become so powerful that he could not take a journey or undertake any project without attracting to himself the attention of the social, as well as of the financial world. When, therefore, he and his wife decided one summer upon taking a trip through Ohio and the other states lying near the Mississippi, there were no bulletins of their movements published in the papers, and they could even halt for weeks at some more pleasing spot than common, without especial wonder being excited, or their proceedings discussed. As the journey was for the benefit of Mrs. Gretorex's health, which really had not been good, they made these stops often, and the longest one and the most fruitful, as you will presently discover, was in a small village called M——. I can locate it exactly when you wish me to do so. Here they remained a month, and when they went away they carried with them a female infant whom they henceforth presented to the world as their own, under the name of Genevieve. I have the inner history of the matter from the woman who was present at the birth of the child, and afterwards saw it transferred from the real parent to this rich but childless lady from New York. The circumstances were as follows: Mrs. Farley—you start at that name, yet you must have already guessed it—was a woman who had been suddenly bereft of her husband and all means of livelihood at a blow. She lived, or rather was staying on sufferance, in the same hotel at which Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex were then boarding, and the day had come for her to give birth to her long-expected child. Her room adjoined that of the New York lady, and though they had barely met in the halls and on the portico, Mrs. Gretorex possessed sufficient of the milk of human kindness to take a certain superficial interest in her unfortunate neigh

bour. She was with her, more or less, during the day, and when she heard the child cry,—it was night but she was not deterred by that fact,—she rose and hastened again into Mrs. Farley's room. An unexpected sight met her eyes. Stretched on the bed was the mother, with almost an expression of terror on her face, and in the arms of the relative acting as nurse, and likewise in those of the doctor was a child, each of which dropped its little head and let fall its little arms with so precisely the same aspect of helplessness, that they looked even in that first hour of their life like the mirror of each other. Two ! and the poor woman did not know how she was going to support one !"

"Stop !" came from Dr. Cameron, in hoarse and difficult tones. "You are speaking of my wife and——"

"The poor girl who looked so much like her that we both took her for Miss Gretorex."

A strange smile flitted over the doctor's pale lips, and that far-away gaze returned. But he soon mastered himself, and remarked with just a shade of bitterness :—

"They were sisters, then ?"

"They were sisters."

The silence which followed this speech was broken at length by the doctor.

"Go on with your story," he commanded. "I think I can see what happened."

"Yes, it is evident," rejoined the detective. "Mrs. Gretorex, who had no children, looked at this poor woman who was burdened with more than she knew how to take care of, and a sudden longing seized her. Approaching the infants, she looked at them both, and found they were equally healthy, pretty and promising. 'What would I not give for one of you,' she cried, and turning, glanced at the mother. Her words and looks were like a sudden gleam of light to the weak and almost despairing woman. Raising her head, she looked at the relative who was with her and smiled as that relative nodded her head; then she glanced at the doctor. 'Mrs. Gretorex is a person of means,' that gentleman declared. 'If she wants one of these little fatherless ones, you might do worse than let her have her.' The poor woman clasped her hands. 'Are you in earnest?' she cried. 'Would you take —do you want——' 'I will consult my husband,' the lady

interposed. 'Have the children dressed, and in an hour I will return.' And so she left them, and when she came back, there were the two infants laid side by side on the bed with the mother, making a picture such as you seldom see, the nurse declared. And the good lady went up to them and looked at them again, and seemed still more pleased and settled in her resolve than she had been before, and finally declared, 'I will take one of these children and bring it up as my own, and bequeath it my name and probably my fortune, upon one condition, and that is that if you give her to me you will give her to me utterly, and neither try to follow her fortunes, nor concern yourself in any way with her affairs. She is to be mine and mine alone, and never by action or word of yours is she or any one else to know anything to the contrary. Are you ready to promise this and promise it upon the Bible?' The poor mother, worn out by much suffering, gasped something and turned her face to the wall, but her hand seemed to grope for the Bible which lay on a little stand near by. Annie—which was the relative's name, and who, as far as I can learn, was the widow's adviser on this occasion—placed the book in it, and looked on while the poor woman kissed it, after which the lady carried the sacred volume to the doctor, whom curiosity had kept in the room, and requested that he would satisfy her with the same oath. But he refused to do this, though he was liberal in his promises, and she had to be content with the vows she wrung from the two women. The choosing of the child was the next step. They had been laid side by side, and to all human eye there was not a shade of difference between them. But without pause or hesitation she stooped over and took the one lying furthest from her grasp, possibly because she thought they expected her to take the other; and with this burden held awkwardly to her breast, she went quickly out of the room, and only the little dent left in the pillow remained to speak of the vanished babe."

"Oh!" burst from Dr. Cameron's lips in a heavy sigh, as his two arms opened with an involuntary gesture. It was the overflowing of a very natural emotion. At the thought of that little dent, all his love for the woman whose infant head had made it, seemed to rush in a flood back upon his heart, till he almost forgot the stern facts which had lately shaken her hold upon him.

"This was the beginning," resumed Mr. Gryce, "of the separation between the sisters. It looked as if it would be a final one, for early in the morning, almost before daybreak I believe, Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex, her nurse,—she did not travel without one in those days,—and the babe, had left the town. Poverty held Mrs. Farley to the West, and for ten years she heard nothing and knew nothing of the child she had given away. Then an inconsiderate word from the very woman who had influenced her to part from the babe, woke the sleeping motherhood within her, and without calculating the cost or seeing her way very clearly, she came East, bringing her little Mildred with her. She took lodgings in Bleecker Street, and recommenced the old struggle for existence under less favourable auspices than before; for here she was a stranger, while there she had been known and recognized for her worth and misfortunes. But she was near the child she had parted with, and she was where she had every facility for educating Mildred, and she allowed these two facts to content her, especially as the latter was very quick at her books and gave every promise of being an honour and comfort to her. When Mrs. Farley first saw the child who upon growing up became your wife, I cannot be quite sure. With all my efforts I have succeeded in gaining but the barest outline of these days, which must have been so full of emotion for this broken-down but still loving and unsatisfied woman. That she did see her more than once at this time is evident from words she let fall in the letters she wrote to this friend of whom I have before spoken. But that she broke her oath by speaking to the child we have no proof, nor is it to be presumed she did, though the temptation must have been great at times; especially when she came upon her alone, as she must have done more than once. We have even the record of a day when, after a walk of miles, she came to the house where Mrs. Gretorex was living, only to observe her daughter driving away from the door in a carriage. Though she had no right to be disappointed, and though she had often taken the same journey without any other reward than a sight of the windows behind which her child was supposed to be sitting, she felt herself strangely unnerved by this incident, and only realized what a spectacle she was making of herself, when she beheld the passers-by turn and look at her as she stood there wringing

her hands and moaning feebly to herself. Then she was frightened, and turning, fled away, only to come back again in the evening, or when her expectations being less, her disappointment could be more easily hidden. Meanwhile, she saw Mildred advance in mind and improve in a thousand ways, without especial pride or satisfaction. She loved her and leaned on her, and in time profited by her earnings to the extent of owing her very sustenance to her; but her deepest thoughts, her deepest longings, were for the proud and dainty Genevieve, who like as not passed her with a stare of haughty inquiry, or that worse aspect of utter indifference, which would be most natural under the circumstances. To see *her* at her side, to hear *her* speak the word mother, were worth the sacrifice of her existence; and when both girls reached the estate of womanhood and she heheld one toiling with uncomplaining affection to supply her failing health with the comforts she needed, it was not on her account she summoned up strength for those long walks through the city streets, but to catch a glimpse of that other one, riding by in her carriage in an atmosphere of wealth and fashion that must have almost overwhelmed the poor woman. The extreme likeness between the sisters added to this effect and was the reason, perhaps, why she never took Mildred with her in these expeditions, even after she grew so feeble that she often tottered in the streets and had to sit down on stoops to rest herself. And did Mildred know the secret of her mother's conduct and frequent despairs, you now naturally ask. It is to be supposed so. Though no account is given of when or where the revelation was made, there are words scattered through these same letters which show that the less favoured child had moments of rebellion against the splendour and love which surrounded her more fortunate sister, though she never allowed her feelings to interfere with her labours or the ever increasing care with which she surrounded her mother. And so the days went by, and the moment came which changed all their lives and led in some strange and as yet uncomprehended way to the tragedy in which we are specially interested. I allude to the instant when Mrs. Farley broke her oath and the silence of years, and informed Miss Gretorex of the falsity of her relationship to the woman she called mother, and her true relationship to herself and the girl who had solicited her

custom and demanded her patronage. It took place through Mildred, and I am disposed to think in Miss Gretorex's room. But my details on this subject are very meagre, owing to the fact that Mrs. Farley wrote but one letter after this period, and that a very disjointed and unsatisfactory one. Her end was near, and beyond wild expressions of thankfulness that she had been at last allowed to clasp her darling Genevieve in her arms, there is little to enlighten the recipient or us. But we can surmise that in connection with what Mrs. Cameron has told us of her first meeting with the youthful dressmaker, came that dressmaker's startling revelation of their relationship, followed by an appeal which finally brought the wealthy young lady to the poor widow's bedside. For more than one person at Mrs. Olney's boarding-house remembers the day when a private carriage drove up to the house and an elegant lady, closely veiled, descended and made her way without inquiry to Mrs. Farley's room, with the ostensible purpose of having a dress fitted. But her stay lengthened into hours, and much wonderment was created. Nor was this the only time she came. More than once during Mrs. Farley's illness, her carriage was seen in front of the house, and once after Mrs. Farley died. But she never again remained beyond proper limits, and the gossip which her first visit had created soon died out for the want of fuel to feed it."

There was silence; Mr. Gryce had evidently finished his story. With an effort the doctor roused himself, eyed the narrator and asked in a strange tone that of itself awakened anew the detective's interest:

"Do you know if she ever met Dr. Molesworth in any of these visits she paid her mother?"

It was a new note sounded. Mr. Gryce recognized the fact, and for a moment looked not only thoughtful but inquisitive; then he shook his head and somewhat equivocally replied:

"We have not got to the end of our inquiries yet."

"Then," was the doctor's grim conclusion, "this discovery that my wife was sister to the girl who died in her room has not satisfied you that she was innocent of her death?"

"It has made the theory of suicide seem less improbable. While it is hard to imagine that a seamstress would be initiated into the secrets of Miss Gretorex's jewel-casket, a sister might. Yet——"

"You are not perfectly satisfied," finished the doctor, "difficult as it is to discover a motive for murder, and simple as it is to see that of suicide."

"I am ready to be made so," the detective suggested. "I ask nothing better than to have my mind cleared of every doubt concerning one whose situation is so pitiful, and who holds so close a relationship to yourself. As proof of it, I am willing to talk over probabilities with you for another half hour. For instance, do you think her dread of having you learn her true parentage was enough to account for the extreme suffering which blanched her hair in a night and laid her in a state of insensibility at our feet?"

The doctor was silent.

Mr. Gryce's look and tone became almost fatherly.

"I have seen much of life," he pursued, "and much of women. Forced by my business into scenes trying to every faculty of their mind and emotional nature, it has been my lot to behold them in their love, their hate, their triumph, and their despair; and I have found that though they can feign much, conceal much, bear much, they succumb only when they own a frightful secret and can see no way of hiding it any longer. Such a secret I believe your wife to hold, and till you can name it by some other name than that of murder, I must continue to think she was the occasion, intentionally or unintentionally, of Mildred Farley's death."

If this language and the whole general conduct shown by the detective at this crisis was a scheme on his part to get at a truth he otherwise feared to miss, he was certainly successful; for no sooner had these words passed his lips than the doctor's face lost the peculiar look it had hitherto worn, and with a start, he vehemently cried:—

"Well, I will give it a name. At the sacrifice of every particle of pride yet left me after the scourging process to which I have been subjected, I will tell you what that secret is. To save her I could scarcely do more, and yet to save her I would willingly give my life."

"Let me hear it," answered the detective. "If it is a secret that can be kept without violation of our duty, be assured that no one beside the inspector and myself shall ever know it."

Dr. Cameron looked at the detective, and said, slowly:—

"Do you know why the woman whom we saw through the curtain at the C—— Hotel looked so astonishingly like my wife that we found it impossible to suppose her to be any one else?"

Mr. Gryce smiled.

"Why, I have just told you," said he. "She was Mildred Farley, your wife's twin sister, and so like her——"

"You mistake," was the dry interruption. "She whom we saw that day was not Mildred Farley but Genevieve Gretorex; in other words my wife herself, or she who afterwards became so."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HEART OF GENEVIEVE GRETOREX.

This revelation, so far beyond Mr. Gryce's expectations, woke within him a peculiar excitement; the pupil of his eye diminished rather than enlarged, and the hand which toyed with the pen-wiper, whose leaves already held so many of his secrets, trembled, or seemed to do so.

"Is that so?" he muttered.

"Genevieve Cameron," continued the doctor, in a hard, dry tone, as if he felt that only by the suppression of all emotion would he be enabled to get through the relation he had before him, "suffers the consequences of Genevieve Gretorex's folly, but she is no longer swayed by it. She loves her husband and only dreads his discovery of the waywardness of her early affections. For the motive which drew her away from home and kept her lingering in that hotel up to almost the hour of her promised marriage with me was a strong, senseless and mistaken fancy for Julius Molesworth."

It was out, and Mr. Gryce as well as Dr. Cameron himself, looked relieved. It only remained now to explain matters.

"Your story," the doctor went on, "was a fitting prelude to mine, for by it we understand how this elegant and reserved woman came to meet this man. It was in Mrs. Olney's house, and at the bedside of Mrs. Farley, whom I now recognize for

her real mother. Though engaged to me, she was moved by something in his manner and speech ; and this susceptibility, incomprehensible to me I assure you, strengthened into passion as she saw him again and again at the same place, till she was ready to forget honour, duty, and her plighted word ; the very remoteness of the world in which he lived, so different from that with which she daily came in contact, lending a glamour of romance to the situation which was certainly not in it to any other eyes, and not in it to her when she came to the final hour and realized all she must give up and all she must take on, to be the fitting wife for the hard-natured, poverty-stricken man she had chosen."

"But——"

"Be patient ; it is a hard story I have to tell and I must tell it in my own way. The eccentricities of Mrs. Gretorex, and the pride which she had doubtless been told I possessed, are her excuses, probably, for the underhand course she took in the whole matter. If her mother—I allude to Mrs. Gretorex—had responded to her as she ought when asked if it were too late for her to break her engagement with me, or if I had shown her even the beginning of that interest in her own welfare which I feel now, she might have been tempted to reveal the truth, and not resorted to such violent and unheard of measures to satisfy her own imagined wishes without endangering that open censure of society which she felt herself too weak to meet. For it was not enough that she contemplated giving herself that very night to another than the one she stood pledged to, but she had also made all her plans for supplying me with a more willing bride than herself ; a bride whose bright eyes, in the one short glance I had of her, deceived me into thinking I had my own Genevieve back, happy and restored, and whom, if Genevieve had not returned, penitent and eager, a short half hour before the time for our descent to the parlours, I should have doubtless led below, to my great undoing and that of every person concerned."

Mr. Gryce uttered an ejaculation.

"It surpasses everything I have ever known," cried he ; "it makes me young again ; it recalls the old wonders of——"

He paused, cast an apologetic look into the heart of the pen-wiper and murmured some excuse. His professional

ardour had made him forget his feelings as a man. He did not lapse again, but his eye burned like a spark of fire.

"The likeness between the sisters must have been most marked, or two such sensible women would not have entered into so tremendous and dangerous a scheme. And yet the ignorance of the one and the passion of the other are sufficient excuses, perhaps, for even so great a folly as this; especially as the latter failed to support the necessary courage for the execution of a plan which probably looked more feasible in prospect than in reality. That Julius Molesworth himself stepped in and put an end to an attempt he certainly had too much good sense to sanction, may be the true explanation of her sudden return to duty and the true affection of one in her own station of life. But of this I can only hazard a guess, for my knowledge begins and ends with an account given by Genevieve of her state of mind between the time she first saw Dr. Molesworth and the afternoon of the day when she expected him to respond to her summons by visiting her at the C—— Hotel."

As he said this, the doctor's hand strayed mechanically to his pocket, which Mr. Gryce, observing, for all his studied attention to the pen-wiper, exclaimed:

"Papers? Let me see them; I like to get my facts at the fountain-head."

Dr. Cameron frowned, greatly annoyed at himself; but upon considering that the same result would have followed his necessary explanation of where he had obtained his knowledge, he thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out the small roll which we have seen once before in his grasp.

"Letters written by my wife," he asserted, shortly, "to the gentleman already mentioned between us. Not sent, but kept as a gift to be placed in his hand when the law had sanctioned their affection. That moment never came, and the roll taken from the hotel to her own room in her father's house, was found by me in hiding, between the cushions of an old sofa. That she did not destroy it is doubtless due to the fact that she felt it to be the best plea she could present if the truth in regard to her conduct on the day of our marriage, ever came to light."

"Miss Gretorex's writing, and no mistake," was Mr. Gryce's sole comment, as he turned the pages over with busy hand.

Then, shortly, "How came your attention to be directed to the sofa as a place of concealment?"

"I don't know. It was one of those discoveries that follow an impulsive thought. I had the sofa before my eyes, and feeling assured that the roll had been hidden somewhere——" Here he explained how he come to know there was a roll at all, and Mr. Gryce, listening, smiled a little smile of congratulation, though inwardly vexed that he had to depend upon another for so important a discovery.

This matter being made clear, Mr. Gryce turned to the first sheet unfolded before him, and began to read. The words thus perused were as follows:

"I write because I cannot keep silent. I write to *you* because you are the first person I have ever met who made me feel I had a soul above the ordinary comings and goings that occupy my days. You will never see these lines, but that makes no difference. Does the sun note all the flowers that turn towards it? I am helped—I am vivified—by the thought of you, and that is sufficient to me. God knows, I needed help; life was so monotonous to me before I saw you.

"I have been thinking and asking myself questions. Are you the man I believe you to be, or have I been creating an ideal out of my own imagination? You certainly have said but little in my presence, yet I feel that I know you; and knowing you, am better, nobler, and wiser. Are these instincts whispers of my good angel, or are they——? Do not make me complete my thought; a trembling has seized me, and I think if I am to be happy in the engagement I have made for myself, I must cease looking too deeply into this new soul that has lately been born into my being.

"Again! and this time you made me feel that my presence was to you what yours is to me. Dangerous revelation! I cannot control my imagination when I think of it.

"What has happened? The old thoughts, the old feelings, have all left me; and I live, as it were, in a new world. It is the look you gave me which has done this? If so, it has weakened bonds you have little recked of, and done an evil whose extent I cannot yet measure. Yet is it evil? That I can ask shows I am no longer a fitting wife for the man who expects to marry me.

"Why have you lived for months under the same roof which covered my prototype, and never given her the look you cast this day upon me? Is it because the souls differ though the bodies are so alike? Or is it that the unattainable is ever the most alluring, and you believe that I am as far above you as I know you are above me?

"My mother is dead, and it was on my breast she drew her last sigh, in my ears she breathed her last word! yet I cannot feel unhappy, cannot realize that I have lost anything. For in that hour I heard your first word of love, and received in the offer you made me more than anyone else could take from me if they took all I possessed.

"I answered you nothing; for what words could I utter, who am bound to another man by a solemn engagement of marriage? But you were generous, and expected none. You told your love, and let it suffice; it is for me to make that love a possibility and its expression our highest honour as well as our keenest delight. Shall I have the courage? When I think of the difficulties in the way of this, I say No. When I think of *you*, my whole heart responds with a glad and fearless Yes.

"You did not know I was engaged when you spoke; you only knew I was far above you in wealth, position, and worldly consideration. I am glad to hear this; it clears your image of what some might think a shadow. But you know it now; Mildred has told you, and you do not withdraw your love—because you cannot, you say. And so I still hold that treasure, to my undoing, or my everlasting joy and honour, as destiny shall decide.

"I have never known a care from my birth. I have never known a want. Is this the reason that a marriage which will insure me the same monotonous life of ease, seems less desirable to me than one which will awaken every latent energy of my soul, and make of my daily existence a struggle and a victory? I cannot say, I only know that it is not the fear of losing the splendours and luxuries which surround me that makes me shrink from the step before me, for they are no longer necessary to my happiness; indeed, they only seem like clogs upon it, to be shaken off without a pang. I speak to my mother—the only one who has been a real mother to me—to-morrow.

"In vain. I knew it before I had said a word; she is so wedded to the ways of the world. I must marry where I have promised, and the fairest dream of my life—the only dream of my life—must remain a dream and nothing more. Can I bear it? Can *you* bear it? I shudder at my fears which whisper No.

"Mildred has told you my decision, and what was your response? That the woman who loved you must be willing to make any and every sacrifice for your sake. Did this mean that you demanded and expected of me a renunciation of my present intentions, whatever the world thought, or whatever the world said? I fear so; but you cannot know what all this implies; you cannot know the strength of those invisible ties which bind us to the honour, the esteem, the will of those who have ministered to our every want from childhood. It would take a superhuman will and a superhuman love to make a woman willing to rend these as they would have to be rent, if I dismissed, without my parents' sanction and support, the proud man whose home is all but prepared for my unworthy self. I feel that I have not the courage—shall I say the hardness of heart?—to do this; and yet to please you I would lie down on my bed and die. Ah, can that be the sacrifice you meant? Make me happy by saying so.

"I cannot marry where I do not love, every fibre of my being revolts. What is to be done, then? Help me, some good angel, help me in my fearful emergency."

"I may not see you, I may not write you—openly, but I can think and pray and talk to Mildred who now and then may say a word to you. Happy Mildred! yet she does not feel herself so. She yearns for just what I long to leave; sees my wealth, and thinks that nothing is more desirable; sees my lover and wonders that I can falter an instant in my faith to him. Poor mistaken, uneasy-souled girl! Yet how generous she is! how noble and how devoted! She makes me feel small sometimes, there is such a sweep to her nature. Could our places be exchanged—Great God! What thought is this which drives madly through my brain! Has my desperate situation made me mad? I really begin to think so.

"We are of the same height, we are of the same age, we are of the same build, and our features and expression are so

alike that I never lose the uncanny sense that I am looking at my own picture in the glass when I survey her. How is it with others? To see, we changed places to-day. I went to Mrs. Olney's, and putting on Mildred's clothes, I dressed her in mine. Then seating her behind the window-curtain, where only her dress would be visible, I sent for the girl who does the upstairs work, and gave her something to do which would keep her quite a little time in the room. And then I talked to her, and while I talked I watched her face to see if she showed any perplexity or confusion. But though she is a bright enough person, I noticed no hesitation in her manner nor any mark of suspicion, and, gaining courage from this, I made the request that Mrs. Olney should come up, and when she did, I received her as I thought Mildred would do, and asked her about a certain matter concerning which Mildred desired some information. The result was surprisingly satisfactory, and I saw her go out of the room without showing by the least change in her look or manner that she had any doubt about my being the person I professed to be. Carried away by this success, we planned a greater test yet. Pulling down the veil over Mildred's face, I led her downstairs and knocking at your office door, I led her in. You were alone, you remember, and placing myself as sentinel at the door, I allowed her to pass me and address you as if she were Geneveive Gretorex. In the pleasure you experienced, you held out your hand, and I watched you while she tore off her veil and stood looking at you, straight and full in the broadest spot of light the room afforded. *You did not pause nor shrink:* and when she declared with that proud poise of the head which seems as natural with her as with me, 'I shall see you no more till I am a free woman,' I knew by your smile and the triumphant gleam in your eye, that even love could be deceived by such similarity as there was between us; and the vague hope and half-formed purpose that had suggested itself to us as the only solving of our fearful riddle, took on colour and became an actually contemplated plan.

"Mildred is like a bird that has found its wings, a flower that has inhaled its first breath of sunshine. If I falter, she buoys me up; if I speak of the awful consequences of detection, she laughs and asks if your image is growing pale in my sight, or if I fear to trust *her*, who has certainly the most

difficult part to play. I can but answer no to the first question, and another no to the second, but the last is the more doubtful of the two, and she sees it, and proposes that I put her to the test before the final decision is made. I have agreed to this, and to-night she is to take my part *here* as I took hers in Mrs. Olney's house.

"What an evening! Mildred came early and we again changed dresses. This time it was an afternoon costume of mine she put on, and I must say she looked exceedingly well. Then I talked to her for half an hour, giving her the minutest instructions possible as to how she was to conduct herself with my mother, and afterwards with Dr. Cameron. She is an apt pupil, and showed such readiness that I could hardly realize she had not been used to these surroundings all her life, and when the time came for her to descend to what certainly seemed to me a most trying and desperate ordeal, she looked so brilliant, and glowed with such happiness, I had to stop her and suggest that she tone her spirits down a trifle, as I had not worn such a face as that since I was a schoolgirl. Whereupon she became deliciously demure, and had her revenge by asking me in a whisper if Dr. Cameron ever did me the honour of kissing me. And when I answered, 'Sometimes,' she murmured, 'Then pray Heaven this may not be one of the times, for I shall certainly blush like mad, since no man has ever touched my lips in all my life.' At which acknowledgment such a pang went through me I almost called her back, for I seemed for the first time to realize her supreme innocence and the dreadful temptation to which I was exposing it. For I can see that, mingled with all her dreams of splendour, ease, and adulation is a very romantic but decidedly fervent admiration for the man who alone can bring her these. She has never heard him speak, but that is not necessary when the eye is satisfied, as hers has evidently been, in the one glimpse she had of Dr. Cameron in front of my house the other day

"It is incredible. She has come back, and in so proud and joyous a mood she seemed to float rather than walk into the room. 'I have done it,' she cried. 'I have sat on the library sofa and talked with father and with mother'—she called Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex father and mother!—'and have been in the parlour and had a few words with Dr. Cameron.

I did not dare to prolong the conversation, much as I would have liked to,' she naïvely added. And see! here I am, alive, and only the least bit frightened and confused. I—I think I startled mother a trifle at first. She is so commanding in her ways I did not feel quite at home with her; but it wasn't anything serious, and with just a little more practice, I am sure I can pass for a very decent sort of Genevieve, even with her. As for Dr. Cameron I leave it to you to find out at your next interview whether he was dissatisfied with his bride or not.' 'He certainly won't be,' I replied, 'if you looked as you do now.' And then we laughed, and then we gazed at each other, long and seriously, and before our glances fell our course was decided upon and the die cast."

"We had planned in case Mildred failed in her daring impersonation, to pass it all off as a joke. Thank God I did not have to so compromise the dignity of my love for you!

"I am not so light-hearted as Mildred, but I am fully as happy. Do you think of me with the same fervour that I do of you? Do I fill all your thoughts and give impetus to all your aspirations? Let me trust so, or I shall never find courage to carry out the delicate and dangerous undertaking whose only aim is to make four human beings happy and satisfied.

"I shall not tell you how I propose to free myself till the hour comes at which I can bid you come and take me, for I am yours. Either I fear you will hesitate to accept so great a sacrifice (though sacrifice is what you expect, even what you demand); or else I dread some hitch or failure in our plans that will throw us all back again into despair. Whatever be the true source of my hesitation, I feel that silence as to our scheme is best, though I know you will rejoice in its success and welcome with all your heart the woman who was willing to give up her very identity in order to be your bride.

"My mother wished to dignify the ceremony of her daughter's marriage by a long string of bridesmaids. But I put my veto upon that, as I feared Mildred could not hold her own amidst the chatter and scrutiny of so many women. So now everything is to be as simple as it will be rich. No one save Dr. Cameron is to be allowed to go upstairs,

and Dr. ——— is to have no assistant. I won these concessions from my mother by letting her follow her own wishes as regards the supper, music and decorations. Miss Mildred will have a splendid wedding, and from the gifts which have already arrived I judge she will have a magnificent display of presents.

"I say all this for the pleasure of adding that I do not envy her in the least.

"Mildred works night and day at the rich gowns which, if all goes well, she, not I, is to wear. They are beautiful, but not as beautiful to me as the one new dress which I have allowed her to make for my own wearing on the day you will take me to your heart. For I have a strange conscience about this matter. Though I could load the poor dressmaker down with gifts, to be used and enjoyed by myself hereafter, some instinct of delicacy withholds me from this, and I provide no more for Julius Molesworth's bride than would rightfully be hers if she were in truth the poor dressmaker whose identity she takes. I know that thus will I please you best, as by this single-heartedness and devotion to one aim, I best satisfy myself.

"I have angered Dr. Cameron by my repeated refusals to see him of late, but it cannot be helped. Mildred will make it all right when she comes to take my place, and I should feel the falsest of the false if I let him touch the hand henceforth dedicated to you.

"Only a few days now and our destinies will be decided. Could you move on so calmly in your calling if you knew what awaited you so speedily?

"I do not fear detection before the wedding ceremony. The flurry and excitement which accompanies such an affair will prevent the only thing which could endanger our scheme; viz., long conversations, in which Mildred would be sure to betray an ignorance which would arouse suspicion. But afterwards what may not happen? I tremble when I think of it, and ask myself if it would not be wiser for her and me if we tied ourselves together, and thus joined, leapt into the North river instead of crossing it, as we expect to do, in our search for a temporary home in which to bury our old selves and rise up with exchanged names, hopes, and identities.

"I fear nothing. Did anyone save you know there were two of us, it would be different; but that secret has been kept absolutely, and any eccentricity which may be observable in Dr. Cameron's bride, will be laid to any other cause than the real one. Besides, as the day approaches I think more and more of you and less and less of myself. Soon, very soon, I shall see the shadow clear from your brow, and the smile beam on your lip. The dreariness, loneliness, and darkness that now encompass you will give way before my love, and your soul will rise free into the light, pure air which is its natural habitation.

"My last day in this house! I went through the rooms this morning in a sort of final farewell, and to see if by any throb of my heart I could detect the least sinking of the courage which up till now has sustained me. But I did not feel any. The gorgeous hall-ways, the luxurious parlours, with their pictures, their statues, and the thousand and one treasures of art which adorn every nook and corner of this superb mansion, are beautiful, certainly, but I could scarcely see them, as I could scarcely see that blank and dismal room of yours which I endeavoured to call up before my mind by way of contrast. For your face was before my eyes, rising between me and every splendour, as it will always rise between me and every sordid sign of poverty and discomfort that may henceforth environ me. Such is the love I bring you. Will it seem a sufficient dower in your eyes? The only pang I feeli s the natural heart-ache at turning my back forever upon those who have nurtured me from birth. Though the bonds which held me to them have been weakened almost to breaking by the revelations which have been made to me this last month, I still feel sufficient gratitude for what they have done for me to find it just a little hard to go away from them without a sign that the cheek which has been kissed by them will be kissed by them no more. It is a death without the satisfaction of parting. But this is only another gift to you, whereby I hope to outdo Mildred in the value of what we bring our husbands.

"I have left my home, and together with Mildred, am now in a small but respectable boarding-house in Newark. How merry we are. She is the lady now, and I am the attendant.

But we talk, talk, talk every minute. Only after long lessons on my part do I allow her or myself the privilege of speaking of him who has been the unconscious cause of this strange and unprecedented action we are contemplating.

"It is done; the Rubicon is passed; Mildred has gone to my old home in St. Nicholas Place, and I have come to this hotel from which I hope, and expect to step forth your bride. Happy hour! I tremble, but it is with joy. A few minutes now and the door will open and I shall see you enter, your face radiant with the promise of every good thing. I can scarcely wait for that moment. The room seems to be reeling about me; I——

"You know what has happened! You know the look with which you met me; the words with which you accepted the greatest sacrifice a true woman could make. I have no words in reply; I simply scorn you to the height and to the depth of my love, which was immeasurable. Since you wanted no Mildred Farley, real or assumed, for your wife; since it was Genevieve Gretorex you loved and Genevieve Gretorex alone that you expected to marry—if you married anyone—as Genevieve Gretorex I will next meet you, but not to marry you! Ah, no, that honour is too great for me. Though you are generous, and in consideration of my having given up everything for you, will take me in my character of poor dressmaker, and as such make me your honourable, if not too highly-esteemed wife, I must decline the sacrifice, so much greater than any I could make. I was a proud woman when I saw you, and I am a proud woman yet. I do not need your sufferance to be a bride. While you wait for the hour of nine to strike, I shall leave this house and return to my true self, and my true place. It is not too late, and when you see me next, it will not be as a dazed and humiliated woman, but a proud wife, happy, and glowing with the triumph of having escaped the fate of being forever allied to one with a heart of stone and a mind respectable, but certainly not appreciative.

"The formal note I leave you will simply tell you where I have gone. When you read it I shall be Mrs. Cameron,"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INSPECTOR.

THE sheets dropped from Mr. Gryce's hand, and he sat staring right before him into vacancy. So long he sat thus, without speech or any movement, that Dr. Cameron, filled as he was with an exhausting anxiety, felt his hair stir at the roots, so threatening to his hopes were this silence and immobility. At last he could bear it no longer. Leaning forward, he touched the detective on the shoulder.

"Well?" he exclaimed in a tone between inquiry and impatience.

The detective threw off his absorption, breathed a hurried sigh, and turned.

"A remarkable situation?" he cried; then, in a low, dissatisfied whisper, "and I was in the house all the time."

"And I had just seen and spoken to the false Genevieve, when the true one appeared at the end of the hall; I shall never forget the expression which crossed the poor girl's face at the sight. There was terror, anger, dismay, rebellion in it all at once. Though I had no clue to the passions which invoked it, I have felt its force to this very day, and now that I know she committed suicide——"

"You saw her?" The detective was quite eager. "Mildred Farley, I mean, dressed, I suppose, in Miss Gretorex's clothes, the ones in which the latter afterwards appeared at the altar?"

"Yes."

"And she deceived you, made you think she was the woman you had courted?"

"Certainly. I saw her but a moment, and I was, as you remember, in a state of too great relief to be critical. I recollect now, however, that she looked brighter, and that she spoke with a freedom and abandon I had never heard from Genevieve."

"And her look when she saw the latter? It was full of commingled passions you say. Was there desperation in it?"

"Possibly."

"Miss Gretorex had evidently not calculated on Mildred's disappointment."

"She was too absorbed in her own."

"Yet Mildred must have suffered as keenly at that moment as her sister. She was on the verge of every joy; had but to reach forth her hand and everything she desired in this world would be hers; when suddenly she found herself snatched back and restored again to the old life of loveless labour and narrow means. And she was an ambitious woman, and, if I read their characters aright, of a nature more ardent, as it was more fresh and aspiring, than that of the sister who enjoyed them."

"I cannot say. But if you measure her hopes by her despair, they certainly must have been great. For I think you must be satisfied now that she had sufficient reason for suicide, to exonerate my wife from the fearful suspicion you have entertained towards her."

"Yes, there was ample motive—for anything," exclaimed the detective. "And to think I was in the house all the time," he ruefully added, shaking his head with an air of regret hard to describe. "But there is no use mourning over that," he went on. "A man cannot be expected to see through plastered walls. Yet that is just what we have got to do, you and I. We have got to penetrate the secrecy of that interview and see for ourselves just what passed between these two girls if you are ever to enjoy repose, or I professional satisfaction."

The doctor looked up, sad and discouraged. "I was in hopes," said he, "that you would be convinced and the whole matter settled before my wife returned to consciousness. And I think I had a right to expect this. You gave me two tasks to perform and I have performed them. I have shown you that my wife possessed a secret, great and humiliating enough to make her dread its discovery with almost mortal terror, and I have proved to you that Mildred Farley had cause enough for any deed of desperation, even to the taking of her own life."

"What you say is true and I do not deny it; but, in telling me all this, Dr. Cameron, you have opened up another question too serious to pass over. What if Mildred Farley rebelled

against the fate which the return of the true Genevieve brought her? Have you any proof to show she was not brought to the instant submission which the circumstances of the case required, by the draught which silenced her accusing tongue and made the requisite transfer of their clothing possible?"

"Have I any proof? Yes: Genevieve's face, which shows she is not a demon! Have you ever looked at her closely, sir? Have you ever watched her smile? There is softness in her expression, gentleness and sweetness, whatever her bearing may be, or the dignity with which she holds the admiration of men in check. But softness in the woman who could do what you suggest! Gentleness in the relentless being who could first lay a sister low and then deliberately denude the corpse, and re-array it in the clothing she wore upon her own back! The very thought is a horror; the very act an impossibility. Why, sir, we are dealing with women, not with ghouls."

"We are dealing with a most tremendous situation, sir," was the quick retort. "A situation that demanded the most prompt and energetic measures. What would apply to the ordinary exigencies of life would not apply here. Love, honour, hope, existence even—for what could Genevieve Gretorex do to win her daily bread—were at stake; and women who, in their hours of prosperous ease, will cower at a mouse, will often become lionesses when they are brought to bay by fate. Besides, I should like to suggest that Mrs. Cameron herself has admitted she drew the body of her sister to the window and threw upon it the pile of clothing we saw there. If she could do this——"

"That was different. It would take but a momentary suppression of feeling to accomplish this; but to undress an inanimate body down to the last detail, and then to put upon it again article after article of her own clothing—why, she had not the time to begin with, not if she worked with lightning fingers and unerring touch. That with the help of her sister she succeeded in getting into her bridal clothes so quickly is wonderful enough."

"So it is—so it is."

"When we think of the time usually spent by women in such matters, and recall the fact that in the appearance of

neither were there any signs of hurry or neglect, we can draw but the one conclusion, that the appearance of Genevieve was followed by an immediate recognition of her superior claims on the part of poor Mildred, that without more talk or parley than was absolutely necessary, they instantly entered upon the work of changing clothes, and then when all was done and the bride was ready for the ceremony, the wretched and cruelly disappointed Mildred felt that gush of despair which could only find relief in death, and seizing upon the bottle, of whose existence and place of hiding she must have had previous intimation, emptied it at a draught just as my poor wife has related."

Mr. Gryce had taken a sheet of paper and was writing.

"Does not this seem the only explanation of the facts as we have observed them?" pursued the doctor. "Can you offer one more reasonable without running the risk of seeming set in your desire to find guilt where one would naturally look for only the finest impulses?"

Mr. Gryce pushed away the paper he had been writing upon, but did not answer. On the contrary, he led the conversation into another channel.

"You have noticed," said he, "in reading these letters written for Dr. Molesworth, how little pain it seemed to cost Miss Gretorex to take the step which, if carried out as intended, would, virtually, have separated her for ever from all her old associations. As this includes her parents, we would wonder at the ingratitude it betokened if we did not know that she had lately discovered that Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex were not her parents in reality, and that she had been subjected to a deception calculated to weaken her regard for them. This could not apply, however, to other friends, and when she came to think, she must have experienced some remorse at the coldness with which she had planned her utter removal from them. There was a Miss Clara Foote I think——"

"My wife has had a quarrel with Miss Foote; they are not on speaking terms, I believe."

"Ah, regarding this matter, perhaps? She may have confided in Miss Fsote?"

"I do not think so. Miss Foote has been in Europe; has only just returned. Mrs. Cameron would not trust such

a secret to the mail. Therefore there must have been some other cause for estrangement. She is disappointed in her friend, she says: why, I cannot tell you, but she will not receive her nor talk about her."

Mr. Gryce drew another sheet of paper towards him and jotted down a few words.

"Women's caprices are incalculable," he muttered to himself; then with an absent air, "Has she exhibited the same indifference to the rest of her friends? Has she shown no recurrence of interest in her old life, with its pursuits and acquaintances?"

"She has shown as much as the circumstances of the case would allow. You must remember she is a bride, and if the bridegroom is not the one for whom she was willing to throw away her old life, he is still a bridegroom, and of undoubted interest to her. She has had other reasons besides the series of shocks she received, for whatever indifference she may have displayed towards the world at large. Besides she was not so indifferent. There was a time in Washington when she seemed actually more alive and eager in her enjoyments than ever before in my experience of her. She glowed with pride and joy, as she could not have done if she had held, concealed in her breast, a secret which allied her to the criminals it is in every woman's heart to abhor."

"That was before Dr. Molesworth appeared before her eyes with the news of his impending arrest, I take it."

"Yes."

"She was not so cheerful after that?"

"How could she be?"

"Worried about him, perhaps,—and tried to hide it."

"If she worried about him, it was only such worry as any woman would experience who felt she had led an innocent man into a dangerous trap from which her own safety forbade her to release him."

"No love in her remorse? No vindictiveness in her refusal to succour him?"

"Mr. Gryce, I am her husband, and as such I find it anything but easy to answer such an insinuation. Still I will endeavour to, since my silence might convey an impression, which, I am happy to say, would be a false one. From the hour Miss Gretorex became my wife, I saw nothing to arouse

my jealousy, nor can I, in looking back now, remember a look or word which would add fuel to the fire you seem anxious to kindle. If a spark of the old passion remained in her breast, it has never flared out to my view; and if her action towards him was pointed by vindictiveness, she hid it so well that I would sooner say it erred on the side of indifference than that of suppressed feeling."

Mr. Gryce looked as if he had driven the doctor into just the corner where he wished to see him, and jotted down a few words more.

"I suppose that, as she returned to herself so completely, she went back to her old ways as regarded her recognized parents? Wrote to them and in all respects was the dutiful daughter she had always appeared to be."

"She would have written, I have no doubt, if she had not had the rheumatism at the time. As it was, I did all such work for her. I wrote two letters a week. She was quite particular to have me inform her mother of everything she thought would interest her."

"She had the rheumatism, yet went out, you say, and enjoyed life?"

"The disease was confined to her hand. She had difficulty in moving her fingers. It has not left her yet."

"I see. Her ills are many; she is to be greatly pitied." And Mr. Gryce, adding a few more words to what he had written, folded up the paper, and taking it and the roll brought to him by Dr. Cameron, rose, saying,—

"We will not continue this conversation till I have had a few words with the inspector. He is not far from here, and if you will wait, I will not keep you long. Both you and myself would feel better to have his advice upon so important a matter." The latter made no effort to stop him; he felt helpless. The detective passed quickly out, but as he did so he cast a sympathetic glance behind him at the doctor's bowed head, which if the latter had seen, it would not have made his spell of waiting any the easier to bear.

As it was the minutes passed most wearily, and it was with a sensation of intense relief that the doctor finally beheld the door re-open and give entrance not to Mr. Gryce but to the gentleman who had called upon him in reference to that fact about his wife's dresses.

Dr. Cameron advanced at once to meet him.

"My fate?" he asked, without pause or preamble.

The inspector took him by the hand.

"Let us talk first," he suggested. "Conclusions of this kind cannot be reached in a minute. Dr. Cameron, you love your wife and you believe in her innocence?"

"Implicitly."

"A bridegroom's judgment is not always the most reliable," the inspector went on; "but I am willing to give you credit for great honesty of conviction and integrity of purpose. So much so that I am ready to hear any remarks you may have to offer in regard to your wife, or the impression she has made upon you since you have been married."

"I should find it difficult to give you my impressions, sir. They have been so varied and so conflicting. But now that I know the events which have made such havoc with her mind, I can conscientiously say that she has shown no caprice or given any evidence of suffering which are not fully explained by those events."

"Even her white hair?"

"Even her white hair. Why, sir," the doctor proceeded, after a moment's pause, "have you thought what she went through in a few hours. Her disappointment in Molesworth, the revulsion of feeling it must have caused, her return, her meeting with Mildred dressed and ready to take her part in the great drama they were playing, the shock and realization which must have come at the sight of what her change of intention would tear from the poor girl with whom she had lately interchanged every token of affection; then the hurried rush to get back into her own clothes, which likewise meant her own identity, followed by that final act of Mildred which in one moment made the room a charnel-house and threw across her triumph and the festivities of the hour a pall of mortal fear and horror, which was all the more terrible that she must hide it from every eye, even from that of her bridegroom. And then that shriek, telling of some unknown terror and discovery. Either Mildred had come to life, and was in anguish to find herself locked in the room with her memories and the smell of death upon her. Or the key that Genevieve held in her bosom had not turned the lock, and in a moment, perhaqs she would hear another shriek, and this time that of Murder!

Was there no fierce mental strain in all this? Then the thought which must have been continually with her, of what she should say and do, when concealment was no longer possible, and she must not only explain the presence of this dead girl in her room, but the incidents and possibly the shameful scheme whose failure had produced the catastrophe. Do you think she was not planning excuses and uttering mental pleas all the time she was receiving the congratulations of her friends? And then the shock of seeing Molesworth at the door—Molesworth whom she had in a measure betrayed, and who she must have felt was capable of anything at that moment, even of denouncing her to her bridegroom and the hundreds of guests there assembled. Was it not a moment to try the soul of the strongest man, much less that of a weakened and already greatly troubled woman? And when, by her hurried action, she had forestalled his possible speech, and by her woman's wit succeeded in hiding herself with him in that room of death above, can you not imagine the shame and horror which must have overcome her as she found herself forced to show him the ghastly results of her trick, and plead with him for aid where she hoped to triumph over him in her disdain? If this and all of this was not enough to whiten her hair in a night, I can imagine no train of circumstances that would. My own hair almost turns at the thought of it, and I am a hard and world-worn man."

"You are her worthy advocate," affirmed the inspector, "and I am almost convinced by your arguments. I should like to ask you one question, however, which may strike you as impertinent and unfeeling, but which I assure you is prompted by no other sentiment than the desire to do you a service."

"Ask it; I know of nothing which I should dare withhold from you in this matter."

"It presupposes that you know me to be acquainted with the letters you have just shown Mr. Gryce, and it is in regard to the sentiment with which you now suppose your wife to regard you. It is love, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not gratitude simply, nor regard; but love?"

"Love."

"Yet it is but a short time since she was pouring out the

most extravagant expressions of affection for another. Excuse me; I cannot stop to soften these hard truths."

"I know; but a passion so wild and unrestrained has terrible revulsions. She needed just such an experience, perhaps, to show her what true love is."

"And you have missed nothing? nothing in her regard for you I mean?"

A smile appeared on the doctor's pale lips for an instant. "If I had no trouble but that, I should be a very happy man."

The inspector, grave beyond his wont, eyed the doctor doubtfully.

"You are not deceiving yourself?" he asked, significantly.

"No."

"Pretty women can often make a man believe anything."

The doctor rose. Anger flashed from his eye, and sounded in the tone of his voice.

"You insult a most miserable man," he began, but meeting the inspector's eye, he stopped, quivered and sat down. "I see that this is only another wrench of the rack," he exclaimed. "You have a purpose other than that of destroying me."

"I want to find out if Genevieve Gretorex was of so light a nature she could turn from one love to another in the twinkling of an eye."

Dr. Cameron surveyed the speaker, realized what danger might lie in his reply and was silent.

"I cannot believe," the inspector inexorably pursued, "that a woman who could feel and express herself as Genevieve Gretorex has done in these letters we have read, could from any mere revulsion of feeling, give her whole self to you with that freshness and ardour your language seems to imply."

And still the doctor was silent.

"If time had elapsed, if after a season of indifference and mental depression she had shown, first appreciation of your goodness and then a gradual awakening love for the man who cherished her so fondly, I could have understood her conduct. But to leap from one ardent passion into another without pause or transition seems so unnatural that I should not blame you if you felt some doubt as to her truth."

"But——" the doctor began in protest, though he got no

further. He felt himself in a net and he did not know which way to turn.

The inspector noted him carefully and proceeded with seeming heartlessness.

"Would not that have been your opinion if it were another man's case than your own that you were considering?"

"Possibly; I cannot say—I seem to have lost the power of thinking; you awake a nest of sleeping serpents in my breast and ask me to stand off and analyze their writhings. Is it necessary to make me suffer so?"

"It is necessary. That you suffer fixes an important fact in my mind. Had you not suffered—had you been able to contradict me—I should possibly have drawn different conclusions. You will forgive me when you receive the clue to my motives."

"But am I not to know them now? Am I to be kept waiting in this suspense——"

"Dr. Cameron, I will not keep you in suspense. Though in consideration of Mrs. Cameron's condition I shall refrain for the present from placing her under actual arrest, I am so confident that she knows more than she has ever told us concerning this poor girl's death that I must beg you to consider her under surveillance. You will find, when you return home, a woman in your parlours whom I request you to place at your wife's side in the capacity of nurse, though her business is directly that of a detective. She is a kindly, capable and discreet woman, who will neither offend you nor betray us. May I rely upon you to receive her and put nothing in the way of her fulfilling her duties properly?"

"Ah, sir," came from Dr. Cameron in a burst of shame and agony, "how can I do otherwise? Are you not the master of my fate and honour?"

The inspector, who found this as hard a piece of work as he ever had had to do in his life, shook his head. "I go no further than my duty compels me," said he. "You have been made the victim of a woman wholly unworthy of you, and have my sympathy, as you will have that of every other honest man in the community."

But the doctor did not care for sympathy: it was justice he wanted. "And is there no escape?" he cried. "Must we

submit to this indignity, though you do not even know there was any murder committed?"

"There is a mysterious death to account for, and Mrs. Cameron is the only one who can account for it. To be sure if we knew all that Dr. Molesworth could tell——"

"That he shall tell. I will appeal to him and he will answer with the truth."

The inspector gazed at the other compassionately. "You might not want to hear it," he suggested.

But the doctor flashed out quickly and earnestly:

"I do. These doubts, this uncertainty will ruin me. If you think he knows the facts which surround Mildred Farley's death, confront me with him. He will not long retain his secret when he sees what his silence will cost me."

But the inspector was not so sanguine. "Dr. Molesworth is a very strong man, and having made up his mind to suppress the truth in this matter, it will not be so easy to force him into speech."

"He does not know that my wife has confessed to the death of this girl in her room."

"And do you propose to tell him?"

"If you will countenance me in doing so."

"And you think that will be sufficient to loosen his tongue?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not agree with you. Men of his stamp have peculiar ideas of honour. If he was willing to perjure himself to save your wife from consequences that she feared, he will need something more than this indirect acknowledgment from her to make him change the story predetermined between them."

"Not with the arguments I shall add to it. If he is a strong man, I am a desperate one, and I will wring the truth from him if he be made of iron."

The inspector looked at the doctor admiringly. "I almost believe you," said he, "and I only wish you might have the opportunity for making the trial. But it does not look as if you could have at present. There is a fact which I must communicate to you Dr. Cameron. Julius Molesworth is not to be found. He has disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Yes. It has been kept out of the papers, but it is none

the less true. He is not in his home, nor has he been seen at the hospitals for days. Whether he is dead, or simply fled, we do not say. We only know that he vanished one night when the eye of the police was off him, and that with all our efforts we have not been able to gain any trace of his whereabouts."

"Gone? Julius Molesworth! then his reasons for perjuring himself must have been stronger than we thought. He must have guilt on his soul, positive guilt."

"In the shape of murder, do you mean?"

The dry tone restored his good sense to the doctor. He knew that his theory was untenable and was ashamed of advancing it. Even if the evidence could be shaken that Mildred Farley was dead before Dr. Molesworth entered Mr. Gretorex's house, there was still no motive, absolutely no motive to be found for the cold and indifferent lover of Genevieve Gretorex desiring or even abetting the death of the girl whose only fault was that she stood in the way of that lady's return to her proper character and position. No: to attribute crime to him in the light of these late revelations was folly. And yet his sudden flight—for he would not admit the possibility of death—could have but one interpretation and that was fear. Fear of what? That was the enigma he now felt himself called upon to solve.

"Inspector," cried he, "Julius Molesworth holds the key to this tragedy. If he did not he would not be missing at a time when every business interest that he has links him to this spot. I am determined to have that key. Tell me then some of the particulars of his disappearance, for I may see a clue in them which might escape the eyes of any but a fellow-practitioner."

"They are few and very simple. He went out one night in his phaeton as usual. Drove to a tenement house where he had a patient, went in, and did not come out. There was a rear exit, you see, and he must have made immediate use of it, for the woman he is in the habit of visiting there declares he did not come near her, nor was he seen on the stairs by any of the swarm of beings who infest the house."

"And the phaeton?"

"Stood there till one of our policemen found it and drove it into a stable."

"Very good proof of his extreme anxiety to escape."

"Very."

"And the boy who usually accompanies him?"

"Was not with him on this night. This, together with the fact that he carried a small satchel, and had taken all his money out of the bank, makes it next to certain that it was a premeditated flight."

"Oh it *is* flight; there is no doubt about that. He became alarmed at the surveillance he was under and took this very simple way of eluding it. But I believe if you will give me leave, I can find him. Though no detective, my wits have been sharpened by the fearful straits into which I have been lately betrayed and I should like the opportunity of testing them."

"Well, I see no good reason why I should refuse to grant it to you. We want the man, and will be glad of any means that will secure him for us. But he has been gone days, and may be hundreds of miles from here. Do you feel as if you could leave your wife?"

"I must. Don't you see that it would take more than a man's courage to watch at her side with these terrific doubts unsolved? I must be active, I must be working for her if I am to hold my reason till she is restored again to her natural self. Besides, I shall not be long. Something tells me I shall find him soon."

"Go, then, but——" The inspector did not finish. His compassion made him dread the discoveries which still lay in wait for this heavily afflicted man.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BRIDGET HALLORAN.

Dr. Cameron went from this interview immediately to Mrs. Olney's house. Not that he expected to learn anything there to guide him in his search, but that he felt he would be better qualified for his undertaking if he subjected his impres-

sions of Julius Molesworth to the judgment of the woman who had boarded him so long, and who might be presumed to have formed a juster estimate of his character than his own prejudice would allow. He found her at home, and, to his great astonishment, perceived that she no sooner heard his name than she advanced eagerly to meet him. They were soon talking, and he was still further surprised to perceive that either from some favourable impression he had made upon her, or from the mere love of talking natural to some women, she was likely to reveal much which her loyalty to the doctor had kept her from imparting to the detectives. As, for instance, she told him that the doctor must have expected to stay away a long time, as he had taken with him his mother's photograph; a circumstance all the more marked that in order to do this he had been obliged to take it out of its accustomed frame. Then he had paid an old bill so trivial as to have been forgotten by her, and left, besides, some loose change in one of his drawers, which would be just enough to satisfy his washer-woman and the boy who took care of his horse. But his clothing and small effects generally had been left behind; and had it not been for the carrying away of that picture, she would fear he had gone to his death, so melancholy had he been since the dreadful occurrence which had robbed him of his bride.

The doctor smiled bitterly at this, but did not interrupt her. If she, as well as all the world believed that the woman who died had been the one whom Julius Molesworth had courted and expected to marry, it was not for him to enlighten her. But what a mockery her words seemed.

The good woman went on. As for Dr. Molesworth himself, he was everything that was kind and honourable. She both liked and admired him; but she did think him a little hard. It was this hardness which had killed Mildred Farley. "Yes," she persisted, as she noticed for the first time that look on her visitor's face which is involuntarily assumed when one hears another utter in their innocence statements which he, through his superior knowledge, knows to be absolutely false; "Mildred was a brave girl and a bright girl, but she had a woman's longing for sympathy and affection, which I do not think he was fully calculated to meet. Even her mother's love did not always satisfy her. I have seen it, and I have felt sorry about

it, for I know that such natures are always bound to suffer. But I never dreamed how much she would have to go through, or that her disappointment and grief would drive her to frenzy and suicide. If I had——"

But here the doctor with that impatience which we always feel when we are listening to phrases founded upon a complete misunderstanding of the true causes for sympathy, made haste to divert her attention from the girl she was discussing to the man concerning whose whereabouts he was so vitally interested. She immediately followed his lead, and for half an hour talked freely about her mysterious boarder, his habits and his friends, without affording the doctor one ray of light to help him in his search; till suddenly she diverted him from the train of thought in which he had been indulging, by the remark, uttered gratuitously and without evident connection:

"And he was so attached to you, sir."

It was like a bomb-shell. Why, Dr. Cameron could not himself have told without a moment's retrospection. "Attached to me?" he somewhat helplessly repeated.

"Why yes, sir, you are his dearest friend, are you not?"

The blood which mounted to the doctor's brow was his only reply. She at once became strangely confused.

"I—I thought you were. I—I was sure you held the dearest place in his heart; your name is Cameron, is it not?"

He bowed, but did not speak. He could not. Such a flood of sudden doubt and harrowing suspicion rushed upon him with her words.

"Then I am sure," persisted the widow, "that he thinks a great deal of you, sir; if I had not been I should have been more careful what I said to you. For I promised Mr. Gryce—a detective, sir, and a very smart man—that I would say nothing more than I could help about Dr. Molesworth and his unaccountable absence. And I am sure I have kept my word, for not a hint of it has got into the papers so far. But you, sir, have superior claims, as I happen to know, and——"

"May I ask you to explain yourself?" the doctor broke in. "I was not aware that Dr. Molesworth cherished for me any particular regard. But if he did——"

"Oh, I know he did. Shall I tell you how I know it? I may have to blush a little, but that won't matter. You have lived long enough to know that a woman has some weak-

nesses and amongst them curiosity. I do not pretend to be better than others of my sex, though it is not often I stoop to read other persons' letters."

Her visitor had turned quite pale now. He lifted his hand, and for a moment looked as if half inclined to stop the conversation. But he changed his mind, and listened quite intently while she went on to say,—

"We had an accident in front of our house the other day. A man fell from a cart and hit his head on the curbstone quite heavily. Of course Dr. Molesworth was called out to attend to him, and as the man was bleeding profusely, he went instantly and without waiting to lock his desk or door or anything. While he was gone, I had occasion to go into his room, and in passing by his desk, I saw an unfinished letter lying there under a paper-weight. As his letters were of no interest to me I never thought of reading it, and was going hurriedly out when my eye fell on a word—a single word—that roused my curiosity to such a pitch that I could not help stopping to see why Dr. Molesworth made use of it. I know it was very reprehensible, but when I tell you that word was *love*——"

Dr. Cameron sprang in haste to his feet. She did not know that she was talking about Mrs. Cameron's former lover, but he did, and felt that it was impossible for him to listen any further to these confidences.

"I am obliged to you," he cried, "but I ought not to hear this. I——"

But here the widow laughed outright.

"Bless you," she ejaculated, "there is no harm in what I was going to say. The letter was written to you——"

"To me?"

"Yes, sir; I saw the name of Cameron plainly at the top, it showed just beyond the paper-weight which covered up most of the writing. Dear Dr. Cameron, I suppose it was, but at that time I thought it must be Dear Miss Cameron (though who she was I could not imagine), for the few words I saw below were very affectionate, more so than is usual from a man to a man, especially when the writer is a person like Dr. Molesworth. As, for instance, these sentences, which I remember because they struck me so painfully, thinking as I did that it was some woman he was writing to. 'I have never

known before what it was to regard any human being more than my work or my ambition. What I called love was a shadow, a vanity. This only is the one great feeling of my life, and if it seems unmanly and presumptuous in me to own it, you will pardon me for the sake of what I have done to preserve you in happiness and honour. Love makes light of sacrifice, and it is love I have felt for you, ever since——' He does not say when, for just then the interruption came, but you probably can finish out the sentence even if you never got the letter. It is quite a relief to find it was not written to a woman."

Dr. Cameron's pent-up feelings found vent in a short, sharp laugh. Not written to a woman? Oh, what judgment this good Mrs. Olney had! What penetration! How well she knew the man she called honourable and kind, and how true was her knowledge of the object of his affections. Dr. Cameron ground his nails into the palms of his hands to preserve his composure, and made his adieux with proper courtesy, though the demon of jealousy was tearing at his heart-strings with a force that threatened to outvie all the agonies of shame and suspense which had hitherto been his portion. For he did not mistake the direction of that letter for an instant. He knew who it was intended for, and he knew what manner of love it was which prompted it. The passion which had died down into comparative nothingness at the sight of its object in the *rôle* of a humble dressmaker had revived again, and burned with triple force now that she had recovered her pristine glory, and shone before all men's eyes in the light of her beauty, wealth, and fashion. Such changes of feeling were not uncommon in men, and Dr. Cameron did not wonder that they had occurred to the cold, ambitious spirit of Julius Molesworth. But he did wonder and secretly madden at the perfidy shown in expressing them, now that she was carried beyond his reach, and had become, through his very indifference, the wife of another. The words, the insinuations of the inspector came back to him as he mused, and he felt himself a fool that he had for a moment supposed that such breaks as had occurred between her and Molesworth were necessarily lasting, even though a third party had stepped in between them with his inalienable rights as husband and guardian. In his present tumult of feeling he was ready to

believe that she had received this letter, that she responded to its passion, and that all her professions of love and devotion to himself had been the miserable subterfuges of a guilty nature, hiding its predilections under a garb of deceitful smiles and equally deceitful tears.

But before he had walked a block, his reason, or was it his irresistible love for her—returned to him. He remembered the pure face shining upward from amid its pillows, in a silent but ever stirring appeal, and as it was in its undeniable sweetness the best refutation, in his eyes, of the direful suspicions by which the police had surrounded her, so it was now the most forcible contradiction he could have of his own secret accusations and dread. As he recalled it line by line, he felt that truth lay hidden beneath it; that whatever her past errors or deceits, she was robed now in honesty and faithful love for her husband. That is, he thought he felt it, though he knew it; but what man can be sure of himself when once that insidious reptile called doubt has crawled into the sacred nest of his affections? Though it may not rear its head, it ever lies dormant there, and noble is the soul, mighty the will that can ignore its hideous presence.

At this moment, however, of renewed confidence, the doctor could do this; and, relieved from his first unbearable sensations, he trod on his way, with gleams of gentle feeling towards the woman so mercilessly threatened in every direction. But for Molesworth his breast held nothing but hardness and an implacable resolution to follow him to his hidden retreat, and wrench from him by force, if not persuasion, both the secret desired by the police and the fact of Genevieve's innocence as regarded his base and uncalled-for renewal of their old communications. The barb which had unconsciously been held by Dr. Cameron's strong hand ever since he knew the humiliating facts of Genevieve's former passion, had received its venom in the discovery he had just made, and woe now to the breast in which it was ultimately destined to lodge.

The real source from which he expected the information which would direct him towards the quarter in which his adversary was to be found, was the poor woman of whose remarkable case, and Dr. Molesworth's peculiar treatment of it, we have already spoken. She, if anyone, would be in possession of the fugitive's confidence. For, though she had

greatly improved under his care, she was not yet entirely well, and, to one of Dr. Molesworth's ambition, the interest surrounding a case that promised him fortune and fame, must be one he could not entirely drop, even if in its retaining he ran that risk of discovery which every other movement of his betrayed he was anxious to avoid.

To the hospital, then, Dr. Cameron now proceeded, and, being the physician who had formerly taken Dr. Molesworth's place in the latter's forced and necessary absence, he was allowed immediate access to the poor patient, who looked exceedingly grateful to see him.

"Oh, did you know, docther, I was dyin' for a look at ye?" she asked, with an accent which proved that, however much she owed to the other physician's skill, her heart had been touched by Dr. Cameron's soothing, genial ways. "It's many a day since you've been here, and I'm that thankful to ye for coming now, if only to see how well I'm doin'. Shure its great luck I've had between the two of ye since I came to this blessed spot. I feel as if the least lift now would raise me right up out of my bed and on to me two feet, and, Lord love ye, the day was when I was that far gone that I was wonderin' how many yards of good stuff it would take for m' shroud, it was that near to the cemetery I was. But you're looking pale, sir; the work is too much for ye. Ain't I right now? And the beautiful lady, your wife, how is she? Well, I'm thinking?"

"No," was the grave response, "she is not as well as you are, Bridget. But I have not time to talk about her, much as I am concerned. I am on my way to visit Dr. Molesworth, and I just stepped in to see how you were that I might tell him."

"Oh, I'm that well, sir," she began, "that sure I'll be walkin' soon," and she looked cautiously about her before adding, "Then you know where he's gone. It's good luck that you do, so it is. Nobody here knows a bit of him at all. They tell me he's sick again, and it isn't for the likes o' me to say a word agin them. It's all I can do for him, sir, and little enough it is, when he done so much for me. I'm sure you'll say I'm right, docther."

Dr. Cameron bowed his head in assent, but he felt strangely guilty in doing so. After all, what did he want of this woman but a betrayal of her benefactor's confidence?

"I've been thinkin', but I don't know why he's gone away," she muttered, a little querulously. "They were afraid of him, and now they don't look after me that he's away, and not like to come and catch thim. I don't get me medicine reglar. He said it was somebody's sickness took him away, and that I wasn't to go agin his orders, no matter what any one of thim said; and when I was well and got out I was to sind word to him. Let him be aisey, for so I will, if I can make out what he wrote for me; bless him, I have to study a bit to read the best a' writin', and, the Lord forgive me, his is that crooked I can't make out a 'd' from a 't.' Would you mind tellin' me, now, if it's Yonkers or Orange he's gone to, for it looks like both or aither? I suppose, though, they would be obligin' enough to send it right if I wrote it wrong, but I'm thinkin' I would be more aisey in me mind to have it go right to wanst, and then there'll be no delay—do you mind, docther dear?"

Again the doctor felt forced to bow, and he would have been glad, indeed, if he could have ended his answer there. But her inquiring look demanded more, as did his own ignorance; so, trampling down his natural instincts, which were all in the way of open and honourable dealing, he said:

"But I am in the same dilemma as you, Bridget. I don't know whether it is Yonkers or Orange. If you will let me read the address he gave you, I will see if I can make it out. He ought to have written it plain enough for you to read, however careless he may have been with other folks."

"He told me not a one was to see it at all," she remarked, as her hand stole somewhat hesitatingly under her pillow; "and said, lookin' me right in the eye, that if it was found I wasn't to tell who wrote it. But, shure, he dinn't mean you, docther, for you're his friend, and knows the medicines as well as he does himself."

"No, he could not have meant me," acquiesced the doctor, thinking how little Dr. Molesworth could really know of the reasons he would have for following him. And, with small consciousness now of the humiliating part he was playing, in his intense desire to see those forbidden lines, he reached out his hand and took the slip from the poor woman's hand.

A single glance sufficed. Informing poor Bridget that it was neither Yonkers nor Orange, but H——, he lent himself for a few minutes to a careful consideration of her condition,

and, when satisfied that she was indeed doing well, and likely to recover, he left her with a repetition of Dr. Molesworth's instructions, and with the gratifying knowledge in his breast that no detective could have worked the affair better.

From the hospital he proceeded to consult the physician in whose charge he had placed his wife, and after some necessary explanations with him, turned towards his home. Alas! that it should be with the lagging step of dread rather than the elastic one of hope—that the worst news he could hear upon entering his own door would be that consciousness had returned to his stricken wife, and that she longed and prayed to see him.

But he was called to no such trial of courage at this time. Mrs. Cameron was no better, and her new nurse, whom he did not fail to find in the house as the detective had promised, required no words to understand why he shrank from entering the sick room, even on the eve of a necessary departure. And so it was that he made his final preparations, and started upon his adventurous undertaking without passing the threshold which had once been as the door of paradise to him.

BOOK III.

THE TWO DOCTORS.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PURSUIT.

THE address given to Bridget by Dr. Molesworth was—

J. M.,
H———,
U——— County,
N. Y.

This place, as so many people know, is on the West Shore Road, and though some distance from New York, Dr. Cameron found himself there before nightfall.

He was an energetic man, and he lost no time in sight-seeing. His errand was to the postmaster, and to the postmaster he at once went.

"Has J. M. been in for his letters to-day?"

"J. M.?"

"Yes. Letters come here directed to J. M., do they not?"

"I cannot say. Are you J. M.?"

"No, but I know him, and want to see him."

"You will have to go to his house, then. I don't know any such person."

The postmaster was evidently sincere, and Dr. Cameron drew back, much disappointed. He was conscious of having made a mistake, and for some few minutes lingered in the post-office in the hope that Dr. Molesworth would stray in. But the attention which his tall and elegant figure soon at-

tracted, reminded him that he was not an inconspicuous figure in this small town, and that if he hoped to see Julius Molesworth enter the post-office he must himself leave it. He accordingly stepped into the street, and finding it quite necessary to have a short confab with himself, he proceeded to walk about the town. As he went he wondered in which, if any, of the houses he passed could be found the man for whom he was in search, till suddenly a second realization came that, for aught he knew, the fugitive might be peering upon him from behind any of the closed blinds which met his eye on every side; and that by this useless parade of himself, he was possibly cutting short all hope of the encounter he was so earnestly seeking.

"Were I only shorter, and of a type similar to some of the men I see about here," he thought, "I might circulate where I would without causing remark—like that poor devil behind me, for instance, whose face, if seen, would be forgotten next minute." And he cast a look that was almost wistful at a lounging, indifferent sort of fellow who, with no apparent aim in life, was slowly shuffling along from one shop window to another. "A detective," decided the doctor, "should have no expression, and seemingly no individuality; neither should he who attempts to play the part of one."

But as this convenient non-individuality was impossible in his case, he soon overcame his momentary disheartenment, and entering the tavern which he had now reached, he ensconced himself in a quiet nook that he might consider, without prospect of interruption, what course he had better pursue to gain the end he had in view. The lounger came into the room too, but that did not disturb his meditations, which were now thoroughly engrossed by the subject in hand.

Where should he go to learn if a man, corresponding to Julius Molesworth in appearance, had lately come into town? To the landlord of the tavern in which he was? Possibly; but he would be more apt to obtain the knowledge he sought from the railroad officials and the drivers of the hacks which conveyed the passengers from the depôt into town. But he hated to apply to them. Indeed, he shrank from any enquiries that would bring his pursuit into publicity, and he had not the skill, and, as we have said, the physique, to gain the information he wished without it. Did he but know one per-

son in town, or had he but thought to have asked the police for some assistance in this part of his undertaking! But he was alone, and he must work out his problem unaided. How then could he discover Molesworth without disclosing his personal interest in finding him? Contemplation brought but one suggestion, and that held so little hope he was ready to discard it without trial. But he did not. As drowning men clutch at straws, so he grasped at anything which held a possibility of success. The suggestion was this: Dr. Molesworth, if a fugitive in hiding, must have one intense interest linking him to New York and its local news, and that was the desire to know what progress the police were making in the affair in which he was so vitally interested. He would therefore feel the necessity of seeing the New York dailies, and would, by secret measures, if not by open ones, bring himself in contact with them. Now where were the New York dailies to be found? That question he could ask with impunity.

He found that there was but one place where they could be bought; and to that place he went with his first inquiries. Had any new comer in town taken to buying a New York paper lately? The dealer knew of no such person. Had he had any fresh orders for the *Herald* or *Times*, within the last week, say? Why, Yes. Old James Lewis had suddenly taken to reading the news, and came every day for the New York *Herald*. And who was old James Lewis? A farmer who lived some two miles out on the west road.

Dr. Cameron remembered the name, and later, after having eaten his supper, asked some off-hand questions about this person, which resulted in satisfying him that the possibility of Julius Molesworth being in his house was great. There was some one besides the regular family staying with him—who, nobody seemed to know; and as Dr. Cameron did not care to seem interested in this person, but only in James Lewis, he did not like to press the point, anxious as he was to establish it. He felt it was almost the height of folly to go so far on such an uncertainty, and yet he had almost made up his mind to do it, though it was Saturday night and the distance considerable; but a remark that was uttered in his hearing a few minutes later rather shook his determination. It was to the effect that James Lewis was always down to meeting on Sunday, no matter what the weather was. If this was so, the

doctor might save himself a very unnecessary journey. He resolved to wait till the next day, and in the meantime to sound the livery stable men.

The evening passed, how, he scarcely knew. He had taken a room at the tavern, and while studying to awaken as little curiosity as possible, still took advantage of the darkness to drop into one or two places about town where there was likely to be talk of a more or less gossipy nature. For instance, he stepped into the blacksmith's shop which he chanced to find open, and stood, a tall and mysterious figure, in the dim background, while the several men and boys, grouped about the fire, discoursed town topics and made vague prognostications in regard to the weather. What good he expected from this move it would have been hard to tell; certainly he had no right to expect any, and was as much surprised as it was possible to be, when a drawling voice uttered over his shoulder,—

"That man at Jem Lewis' is an odd 'un."

As the tone employed had been loud, the remark was evidently intended not for him but for the group in the centre of the smithy. More and more astonished, he stole a look behind him and saw the slouching form of a man, who, as he looked, lounged forward and joined the group in front of him.

"What do you say?" asked the blacksmith, turning a pair of curious eyes towards the new comer.

"I say that that ere man at Jem Lewis' is an odd 'un."

"What man?" cried one voice. And, "Who are you?" cried another.

"I am a fellow as peddles small wares," cried the interloper, carelessly. "I've been about some, and I say as a contribute to this highly intellectooal conversaich that the man who boards at Jem Lewis' farm-house is a curious cuss."

"Then you show you don't know anything about it," came in convincing tones from the man who stood next to him. "There is nothing curious about John Staples. I've known him this two year, and because a man is sick that is no reason why he should be called queer."

"He means that fellow at Hunter's. He's queer enough, I'm sure. Not once has he stepped out on to the road since he came there; and he's not sick neither."

"Maybe I do," acknowledged the pedlar. "I go to so

many houses, I sometimes gits names mixed. How does he look, now?"

"*I* haven't seen him, and I don't know of anybody as has. I've only hearn tell of how old Mrs. Hunter had took in a boarder as was a stranger in these parts, and of how particular she was not to let anybody see him, because he was writing of a book and didn't want no interruptions. As if that was any excuse. You might as well say I didn't want to see no one because I am building an L onto my old shanty."

"Mrs. Hunter was always a queer un herself," broke in a new voice. "I remember the day when she shut the door in the face of my gal because she wanted to know how many dollars the old woman had laid up in the bank."

"So she might know whether to marry her son or not," laughed the blacksmith.

"Wa'al, and was that anything more than natural providence?"

The blacksmith's guffaws grew louder.

"Isn't Mrs. Hunter's house the next one to Jem Lewis?" carelessly interposed the pedlar.

"Yes, of course, only a mile between them."

"Then that's how I got the places mixed," said he, slowly turning himself about towards the door. Dr. Cameron, who was watching, instantly left the smithy, and after a little strolling through the streets entered the livery stable. Here he made arrangements for the use of a horse and buggy on the following day, and was just meditating whether he should venture upon a question or two, when that same drawling voice was heard again over his shoulder, saying,—

"Is that man still stopping at Hunter's do you know?"

"Can't say," answered the livery stable keeper. "I havn't heard of his going away."

"I want to know because I've got a bundle for him, shirts and things what Mrs. Hunter got me to buy in New Haven. Going up that way to-morrow?"

"Don't know," with a side glance at Dr. Cameron, who, convinced that this pedlar, as he called himself, was likely to be his good angel, stood at the door slowly fitting on his gloves.

"Mrs. Hunter made me promise I'd get the things out there before Monday morning; but I can't kill myself. Does Mrs. Hunter come this way to church?"

"Guess not; never see her here."

"How about Jem Lewis, is he one of the accommodating kind?"

"Rather; he gets all her mail I believe, and carries a paper out there every day, that I know."

"Then I'll see Jem Lewis when he comes into church to-morrow. You don't happen to know what the name of this strange gentleman may be, do you now?"

"No; I drove him out there, but he didn't tell me his family affairs."

"Didn't he now? Wa'al, wa'al, it's mighty particular some folks be. Now I'd just take pleasure in telling you all I know. Was he a dark man?"

"Very dark."

"That's good; I thought he was dark; I only caught the least glimpse of him through an open door, but I was sure he was dark. You see, I'm particular about it, for I had ties to buy, and I bought 'em for a dark man. Has he got a long beard?"

"No, nor a short one. His face is as smooth as my hand."

"Better and better, them ties will be sure to suit. Don't you think so, mister?" he asked, as he passed Dr. Cameron on his way out.

But before that gentleman could reply, the odd, shuffling figure was gone; and full of thought and question, the doctor made his way into the street and so back to the tavern, asking himself whether his purpose in town had been divined, or whether all that had occurred was a mere coincidence, as strange as it was acceptable.

The next day was none too pleasant, and as he rose with a blinding headache, he allowed himself to rest through the morning, thinking he would be able to start upon his undertaking by noon. But it was three o'clock before he felt fit to drive a team. At three o'clock, therefore, he started, and at about four approached a farm-house which from its appearance and location he took to be that belonging to the Widow Hunter. He saw it first from the brow of a small hill, and stopped his horse to contemplate it, and also to gain some control over his feelings at sight of the imagined retreat of his enemy. The next moment he drove on, but the impression

made by the mass of grey sky, and that one low white house with its line of smoke rising up against the dull background of the wintry landscape, filled him with an unaccountable chill for which he could not at that instant account. A vague foreboding for the first time seized him, which seemed in some way to be connected with the penetrating wind and the menacing skies, and though he recognized it as a weakness, he had half a mind to turn round and go back, rather than face the threatening something hidden in that seemingly harmless landscape before him.

But such feelings vanish before an-all absorbing duty, and by the time he found himself within a stone's throw of the house, he had forgotten everything but that he was on the verge of an interview from which he hoped to depart a relieved and contented man.

The house was the ordinary white frame one which we see so thickly scattered amongst our native hills and valleys. It had a front entrance and a rear one, and the usual yard, behind which stretched fields and meadows, with here and there a grove of leafless trees. The windows were few, but those looking towards that part of the road from which he approached were shutterless, and he had an uneasy sense of having been seen, though there was no movement visible at any of the casements, and saving the thin line of smoke slanting away from the solitary chimney, there was no sign of human presence in or about the premises.

"If I should have been recognized!" he thought, with a sudden recollection of the real relations in which he and this Molesworth stood.

But this possibility seemed so small that even his uneasy mind refused to entertain it; and, driving up rapidly to the front of the house, he leaped to the ground, and without stopping to tie his horse, which, by the way, he had been told would stand for any length of time, he advanced hurriedly to the door and knocked. If he had not been seen from the side he was certain that he would not be from the front, as the windows facing the road were protected by blinds, all of which were as tightly closed as if they were never expected to open again. He, nevertheless, anticipated a speedy entrance.

But this pleasing hope lessened moment by moment as no

answer came to his first or his second knock. Nor did the third bring any response, though it was forcible enough to shake the door on its hinges. Those within had evidently made up their minds not to hear him, and as this fact became apparent he felt a sense of desolation sweep over him, which the ever-lowering sky and the stretch of dismal landscape before him did not tend to mitigate. It seemed as if the wind became more searching, piercing even to his heart and its secrets; while the silence, which was anything but a Sunday one, in the shivering effect it had upon the nerves, filled him with a renewal of those vague apprehensions for which there seemed so little reason in nature.

A fourth and still heavier knock ended his efforts to gain admittance at the front door. If there was no one at home (which he did not believe) he was but wasting his time here; while if the inmates were simply determined not to admit him, all the knocking in the world would not make them change their minds. So leaving the front door, he walked determinedly around the house to the back entrance, and, finding it unlocked, knocked once out of politeness, and without waiting for the response he had so little right to expect, lifted the latch and walked in.

An empty room opened before him; that is, there was no one in it, though from the preparations visible on a table before him and from the somewhat savoury smell that arose from the various pots and pans steaming on the stove, he gathered there was some one in the large and comfortable sitting-room of which he caught a glimpse through the half-open door at his right.

Resolved not to stop at anything, now that he had entered the house, he gave a sharp rap at this door, and with just an instant's delay, followed it by a quick entrance and disturbed no one. For this room like the back one, was entirely empty, and he found himself staring with sinking heart and a discouraged spirit at a collection of stiff photographs in pine cone frames on a mantel-shelf that reached nearly to the low ceiling. No evidence here or anywhere in the room of that presence, to encounter which he had come so far and was now risking so much in the way of politeness and habitual self-respect.

He was still standing there, hesitating whether to pursue

his researches into the ghostly parlour, when he heard a sudden step; then the sound of a door hurriedly opened and shut, and then—could he believe his ears? the tramp of a man's foot on the path without, followed by the sound of wheels, as if the horse and buggy he had left in front was being tampered with. Struck with consternation, but not robbed entirely of his self-possession, he ignored all the proprieties, and bounding forward into the hall, he reached the front door and flung it open. Dr. Molesworth, with hat in hand and overcoat on his arm, was jumping into the buggy.

"For Heaven's sake, Molesworth!" cried the doctor, holding out his arms, as if in that way he could stop that stern and determined man.

But the other only waved his hand, and thrusting on his hat, took the lines and speedily drove away. As he did so Dr. Cameron called out once more, "If you are a man, come back and face me, but if you are a coward——"

The words were lost in the clatter of the horse's heels.

Dr. Cameron stepped into the house and sunk helplessly on the first seat he found there. So Julius Molesworth was a coward as well as a knave, and was not above the meanest of tricks to save himself from an encounter that his conscience told him could bode him no good. Dr. Cameron writhed with shame and impotent rage as he thought of it, and could have cursed his folly for the lack of precaution he had shown in leaving his horse within reach of the pursued fugitive. But who could have calculated upon such an expedient being employed by a man for whom he had once done an actual service; though to be sure he had unwittingly robbed him of his bride and been unwittingly robbed of her affections in return.

The direction taken by Dr. Molesworth in his flight had been away from town. This added to the perplexity of Dr. Cameron, who saw himself left at a strange house in the face of a coming storm, and with no means of return to his comfortable quarters or of pursuit of the man whose dastardly flight proved him to be even more of a factor than he had supposed in the great mystery which involved not only his own honour but that of a beloved and stricken wife.

His thoughts were interrupted in a characteristic manner.

"Well!" exclaimed a voice from the doorway, "and what does this mean?"

He rose, turned, and faced a strongly-built, somewhat energetic middle-aged woman, whose air and attitude bespoke her to be mistress of the house.

"Ah, madam, excuse me," said he, giving her such a bow as she had probably never before received. "You find me an unwelcome intruder into your home. I came to see the gentleman who has been boarding with you, and he has played me the trick of running off with my horse and buggy, without giving me so much as an opportunity of telling him my business."

"He is a smart un," was all the answer he received, as the woman strode into the room and stood peering out of one of the side windows that overlooked the approach from the town.

The doctor, foreseeing no sympathy here, at once turned away towards the door.

"It is a long walk to town," he remarked, "but I must at once undertake it if only to procure means to follow the man I have come here to see."

"You won't catch him," said she.

"Why?"

"Because it is going to storm. It is going to storm so that the man who has half an hour's start will never be come up with by the person who chooses to follow him."

Dr. Cameron laughed.

"You speak as if it were January, and we were in the wilds of some wilderness instead of being not a hundred miles from New York, and in a time of year when winds blow and snow scurries but does not pack or drift."

"You are a city man and you don't know country weather. Besides, this storm will beat any storm that has been in these parts for years. I don't know much, but I know what such a sky as that means, and so will you before another twenty-four hours have gone over your head."

Moved by these words, Dr. Cameron mechanically cast a glance from the window before which she was standing. But he did not see the sky, for his attention was immediately diverted by the sight of a team descending the hill towards the house. The widow had evidently seen it too, for she

turned towards him impressively, and began to offer him the hospitalities of her house as if anxious to distract his attention from the coming team. His caution at once took alarm.

"Who is that coming?" he asked.

"Oh, that is only Jem Lewis coming home from church. He lives in the next house down there."

"But he has a team, and that team may be hired!" exclaimed the doctor, hurriedly opening the front door.

The widow tried to stop him, but she soon saw it was of no avail; the approaching farmer had already slackened the pace of his horse and in a few minutes more had actually stopped before the door. There were two men in the old-fashioned vehicle, and Dr. Cameron did not know whether to be surprised or not when he saw that one of them was the ubiquitous pedlar.

"Haloo, missus," was this person's greeting. But next minute he was silent as the doctor uttered, breathlessly,—

"My horse and buggy have been run away with from before my very eyes. I want to follow the thief. Will you drive me over this road? I will pay you well for the service. That horse of yours looks as if he could travel."

"Wa'al, he can," acknowledged the farmer, not without some satisfaction in his tone, "but you see as how it is Sunday——"

"You havn't heard my terms."

"And likely to snow right smart——"

"I will pay well, I say."

"And there are three of us——"

"Let me take the team, then; I will buy it here and now."

The farmer opened his eyes.

"You are in a goodish hurry," said he.

"Will you sell it?"

"No. I am a church member, and I don't bargain on Sundays. But if this yere chap here will give you his place—— What sort of a man was it as took your horse?"

"The boarder here; a man I know. Don't stop to talk, but decide at once. Will you drive me, or shall I go back to town for a man that will?"

"Oh, I'll drive you. But it's curus. *That* man? Why, I thought he never stepped foot out of doors."

Meanwhile the widow stood on the steps looking anxious,

and the pedlar, with eyes that showed snap for once, put one foot out of the wagon and drew it back.

"Yere promised to take me as far as yere went," he declared to the farmer, "and I'm disposin to keep you to your word. But I don't weigh much; the mare'll never feel me. Jump in, general, we'll soon clear the ground between us and that scamp."

The farmer still demurred; but upon Dr. Cameron's making a move to enter the waggon, he hitched himself along and gave him part of his seat. Then deliberately taking up the reins, he observed,—

"This is a pretty ending of this Sunday's sermon," and started up the mare.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ESCAPE.

It had seemed to these three but a trifling matter to overtake this man and his sorry horse, but an hour's riding soon convinced them that they had a task of more difficulty before them than they had anticipated. For, in the first place, Dr. Molesworth had sufficient start of them to be out of view, which, in that thinly settled portion of the town, was a great advantage, as they were thus robbed of all means of determining whether he had kept to the main road or taken one of the many side ones that were continually branching off from it. Then the darkness was fast settling down, and the storm prognosticated by Mrs. Hunter began to make itself felt in a slight drizzle that filled the air with dampness and discomfort.

Under these circumstances the farmer soon became tired of the business he had undertaken, and after several hints to that effect, finally drew up his horse and expressed his intention of returning home.

But the doctor, who thought he saw the top of a buggy in the distance, renewed his prayers and protestations, which being seconded by the pedlar, whose blood seemed really to

have been stirred by this chase, Mr. Lewis finally consented to drive them as far as a certain house, where if they could get a man to take them further, well and good; if not, he would carry them back to his own home. But more than this he would not promise.

They could not blame him. The wind was blowing furiously and the horse showed signs of discouragement, so they accepted the alternative given them and drove as rapidly as possible to the house he had pointed out.

"Has a fellow been by here in Hyde's new buggy?" was the shout they sent forth as they neared the spot and saw a man battling to shut the barn door against the wind.

The man nodded and pointed down the road, then turned again to his task. Dr. Cameron drew a silver dollar from his pocket, and leaping to the ground, vaulted the fence and approached the man.

"This much to tell me what he said," he cried, pushing the dollar under the man's nose.

The man looked at it, shook his head and reluctantly admitted that the gentleman had said nothing.

Dr. Cameron, who had caught the sparkle of cupidity in the man's eye at the sight of the coin, immediately cried,—

"Five times this then, for a team to pursue him. This man's horse is worn out."

"And so would mine be in ten minutes. Phew! but this is a gale!"

"The horse ahead will give out sooner than yours. Come, earn a cent while you can. It may not be over a ten minutes' job."

"That's so," the man answered, reflectively, giving another tug at the doors and then flinging them open impulsively. "Step in, sir, out of the wind. I'll harness up in a minute. But it's five dollars whether we overtake the chap or not?"

"Yes, if you go as far as you can and don't leave me in the road when you're tired."

"Never fear; I'll take you into town anyhow." And then Dr. Cameron learned they were on a fine but unfrequented road, which, curving about on itself, led back to H—— town, which he had all the time supposed to be at his back.

"And how far is it from here to the tavern?" he asked.

"Five miles if you go through S——. Three if you turn off into H—— direct."

"Very good, we will go as the man ahead goes, and that won't be through S——, I am sure." And with a somewhat apprehensive look at the sky, he left the barn to tell of his success to the couple awaiting him.

He found only Farmer Lewis there.

"Where is the pedlar?" he inquired.

"Gone in to warm himself. Says he has had enough of this kind of thing. I reckon he will stay where he is to-night. Is Noyes going to lend you his horse?"

"Yes, he is harnessing now."

"I shouldn't have reckoned on his being such a fool. But it is no business of mine. My business is to get back to my old woman before my mare gives out. Good-bye; you won't catch that fellow ahead near as quick as you will a cold." And with this Parthian shot, he turned his team about and disappeared in the darkness before the doctor could utter his thanks.

The minutes that Dr. Cameron now had to wait were few, but they seemed interminable. When the new horse and team did at length make their appearance, there was the pedlar coming too, eager and anxious as ever to see the affair out.

"Now don't say you don't want me," he cried, as the doctor opened his lips in protest. "If you won't take me inside I must run along at the back, for I'm going into H—— to-night if I have to trust to my two feet to carry me."

Was this the shambling, shuffling ne'er-do-well of the evening before? Dr. Cameron began to doubt him, and questioned in his own mind as to whether this seeming pedlar could be a friend of the enemy, bound to delay him. But upon a second look he found the man so careless, so good-humoured and so free from all suspicious appearance, that he had not the heart to deny him a seat in the buggy, though he knew he was being imposed upon, and was under no claim to burden himself with this audacious intruder. Meanwhile the wind was increasing every minute, and the rain falling like a thick veil over the landscape.

Their new driver meant business. Straight ahead he went, without talk or delay.

"You want to catch that feller," he cried; "wa'al, we'el git him."

But they rode on and on without coming up with a buggy or vehicle of any kind. There were times when they thought they heard the sound of wheels ahead of them, but the wind was blowing so fiercely that they could not be sure of anything. When they reached the place where the roads divided they paused for consultation.

"I'm sure he won't go on to S—— if his home is in H——," ventured Noyes. "A dog wouldn't go round a barn without cause to-night."

"Does he live in H——, sir?"

"No, he lives nowhere about here; what he wants is to get away from me. Now, will he think he can do it better by keeping on the road, or will he take the horse he has borrowed back into town?"

"That's the question. If he knows about the Sunday train that goes through S—— at midnight, he may think he can best escape that way. If he don't——"

"A train? A Sunday train going south?" ejaculated the doctor.

"Yes, sir, due at S—— at 12 M.

"Drive to S——. That train is what he is after. He knows he could not escape me by any other means."

And they turned off to S——.

The sky by this time was perfectly dark, but this did not seem to make much impression upon the determination of any of these three men. They rode on, and after a sufficient length of time reached S——.

They drove at once to the inn.

A horse and buggy was standing before it. Dr. Cameron, greatly excited at the sight, leaped to the ground, and striding up to the team, took a close look at it.

"We have trapped him," he exclaimed, in undisguised satisfaction. "This is the horse and buggy he took from me."

But when they reached the hotel bar and began to make inquiries, they found they were not so near the fugitive as they imagined. He had driven up to the house, it was true, had even entered the bar-room to ask about the trains, but he had not remained long, and when he went, he said nothing about coming back.

However, he could not be far away. The team was there, and as he undoubtedly meant to take the midnight train, he would certainly reappear on the scene before it was due. Dr. Cameron, feeling quite satisfied, dismissed the farmer, and would have been glad to have seen the pedlar disappear with him. But this person was evidently too comfortable in the warm corner he had at once appropriated upon entering the house to be easily dislodged; so the doctor, ignoring him, comforted himself with a good supper, and then choosing as retired a spot as he could find, sat down to await the reappearance of Julius Molesworth.

But he had scarcely settled himself into something like comfort, when he asked himself if he were doing the wisest thing he could in staying there. He began to think not. He remembered Dr. Molesworth's former trick, and felt that he was amply capable of another.

What if the horse and buggy had been left there as a lure while he himself sped far away. As the doctor contemplated this possibility, he grew too uneasy to sit still, and rising, went out again to take a look at the weather. He found it very unpropitious. The drizzle had become rain and the wind was still blowing. In the driving wet, the horse he had hired in H—— stood shivering, and as he contemplated it he thought of the satchel he had left at the tavern, and at once took a resolution to drive back to H—— and procure it. The distance was not long in a direct line, and he would not only have the satisfaction of returning the horse, but of quieting any suspicions on the part of Molesworth if, as he feared, he were in league with the hotel clerk, and knew, or would soon know, that his pursuer was on his heels.

Returning, therefore, to the room he had left, he informed the clerk that the team in front of the house was in reality his, and explained as much of the circumstances as he thought necessary. Then, perceiving that his story was credited, expressed his intention of driving the horse back to H——, and, without waiting for any man's demur, proceeded to carry out his resolution on the spot.

The pedlar, looking a little disappointed, slouched to the door as he drove off.

"Coming back, mister?" he shouted.

Dr. Cameron may have heard him, but if so, he neglected to answer.

His plan was to ride to H——, procure his satchel, pay his bills, restore the horse, and board the same train at H—— which he expected Molesworth to take at S——. He would thus be on hand to greet the fugitive when he entered the cars; or if through some accident or trickery that gentleman failed to appear, he could himself get off at S——, and so continue his search on the spot where his enemy had last been seen.

But when he arrived at H—— he found to his intense chagrin that this especial train did not stop there, and that if he proposed to be on hand to hinder Molesworth taking it at S——, he must hire another horse and immediately return to the town he had so inconsiderately left. But this to his own judgment seemed wholly impracticable, the weather having grown rapidly worse since he started, and the road being, as he himself could testify, in anything but favourable condition for midnight travel. And sure enough, when he proposed this measure to the livery stable man, he found him totally unwilling to let another horse go out of his stables that night. Nor could he find a driver who wanted ten dollars badly enough to undertake the job. He was, therefore, notwithstanding his pluck and purpose, obliged to swallow his discomfiture as best he might, and yielding to the force of circumstances, put up again at the tavern where he had spent the preceding night. The sole comfort he found in the situation was the fact that the midnight train had been so delayed by some accident which had occurred on the road, that it would not be likely to pass through H—— much ahead of the regular morning express which left H—— at 7 A.M.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GREAT STORM.

It was a night to be long remembered by a sleepless man. Such wind, such driving of snow and sleet! such swaying and crackling of trees above a roof that literally rocked to and fro in the gale. If he rose and looked out, nothing but a hurly-burly of snow met his eyes; if he calmed himself and lay down, all the cries and shrieks of pandemonium seemed to hurtle in his ears.

When daylight finally came, and with it the summons to rise, the view he saw from his window was certainly enough to daunt even his courageous spirit. There was not only snow, but such piles of it that all landmarks had disappeared, and he seemed to be in a different place from the one he looked out upon the day before. And the wind, instead of abating, appeared to have increased, while the snow still fell with that unremitting persistency which gives promise of a whole day of storm.

A mid-winter storm in March, and he on the track of a man who, in all probability, had one train the start of him! The thought exasperated him, and calling every energy into play, he braved the wind and fought his way to the station. Here he found that the midnight train had passed at six, and taking advantage of the telegraph operator being on hand, he sent a message to the station-master at S—— inquiring if a person of such and such a description had taken that train for New York. The answer came back, yes, and Dr. Cameron, no longer conscious of the fury of the storm or the hazards of travel, bought his ticket and sat down to wait for the early express.

But this train, like its predecessor, was also late, and he lost three hours at the start. These, however, did not count for much, as he soon found; for the difficulties of the road increased so rapidly that the engine experienced the greatest difficulty in cutting its way through the ever-accumulating

drifts, and so halted and laboured that hours were consumed in a passage usually occupying but a few minutes.

"Fate is against me," thought Dr. Cameron, as the morning waned into afternoon, and they were yet miles from New York. "I have not only lost my man, but myself. I feel like a wayfarer in a solitary wilderness."

For though he was not the only occupant of the car in which he sat, and he had but to lift his eyes to perceive many anxious and perturbed faces, he felt the pressure of his own misery too much to be conscious of their presence. But as time still passed and nightfall began to descend, and with it the increasing certainty that they would not be able to struggle much longer against the drifts which filled the cuts through which they were obliged to pass, he began to remember there were others about him who had their own anxieties and fears, and shaking off the gloom that oppressed him, he looked up and down the car with that gentle and sympathetic glance which so easily secured him friends.

He found the car to be about half full of passengers, mainly men, but there were two or three women amongst them, and strange to say, these bore the prospect of a night of discomfort with more apparent cheer than the men. Perhaps their realization of the situation was less; perhaps their frail bodies held sturdier souls. However that was, Dr. Cameron felt himself touched, and escaping from the thraldom of his own selfish thoughts, he endeavoured to enter into the interests of the moment.

He found the situation to be anything but encouraging. Though the engine was making herculean efforts, it advanced but slowly through the huge drift it was endeavouring to pierce. At last there came a shiver and a slow settling into quietude. Its efforts had ceased.

"Stalled!" cried one voice.

"In the loneliest part of the road!" exclaimed another.

"And night coming on," added a third.

The women said nothing, but looked at each other. Probably they were thankful for their lives.

"Let us see if a gang of men cannot do something with that drift," now suggested a sturdy individual, rising and moving towards the door.

"Where are your shovels?" put in another.

"Then it isn't a matter of one drift but fifty," cried another voice. "I am from the West, and I can tell you——"

To escape what he could tell, and to reconnoitre affairs for himself, Dr. Cameron went out on the platform. But he did not stay long, the rushing wind almost took him off his feet, and he found himself forced to step back in order to recover himself. Taking a deep breath, he made a fresh start, and this time succeeded in clinging long enough to the brakes to perceive they were on a plane, naturally level, but now piled high with mountains of snow. If houses were near he could not see them, nor were there any signs of fences or roads. "Have we been transported into Siberia," he thought.

Seeing one or two train-men on the ground below, he asked them if they knew just where they were, and if there was any hope of procuring food from some farm-house near by.

The answer was far from consoling. They knew where they were well enough. They were on the dreariest part of the river, between——and——. No houses here, none nearer than three miles, unless you except the Harvey cottage, where you would be more likely to meet rebuff than welcome.

Rebuff on such a night! the doctor did not believe it. "And how far is the Harvey cottage?" he inquired.

"Oh, that's only a mile."

Only a mile! a mile seemed some distance through the wilderness of snow-hillocks he saw before him.

"But there's no use going there. Old Harvey wouldn't open his door to a dog, and he likes *them*. He is the darndest old hermit in these parts, and his house is the queerest mouse-trap you ever see in your life. Better stay on the train, sir." All this shouted against a howling wind.

Dr. Cameron thought this last bit of advice good, and for some time was disposed to follow it, but as the night settled and the cold became more and more biting and intense, he began to ask himself if these women must suffer hunger as well as cold, and whether it would not be less painful to endure the hardships of a vigorous battle with the snow than to sit in that comfortless car all night eating out his heart, as he would be sure to do if he remained inactive. Waiting is hard enough when one is in the possession of pleasant memories and cheerful hopes, but when the least lapse into meditation brings

bitterest fears and terrible emotions, quietude becomes intolerable, and one is willing to risk all and every danger to escape it.

So having found three or four others who felt as he did, he sought out the conductor, and asked him in what direction the Harvey cottage lay, and whether its owner was really so hard-hearted as to refuse bread to a band of storm-locked women and children. The answer was an expressive shrug and a short,—

"Better join the party from the forward car; they are going to try and reach the village three miles away."

Dr. Cameron at once signified his acquiescence in this plan, and the result was that in a few minutes the two parties had joined forces and started with cheerful words and energetic promises, towards the distant village. Was it a foolhardy undertaking? There were some who were soon ready to say so, for not only was the power of the sleet and wind unprecedented in the experience of them all, but the road was itself uncertain, and the man they had taken for their guide was the first to falter and require the assistance of his comrades.

Then it was nearer night than any of them realized, and the darkness of twilight soon added itself to the general dimness made by the rushing, blinding snow. Altogether, the first half-hour of struggle was a desperate one, and had there been one there who knew the route back, they would have simultaneously returned; but the only one who could give them any guidance was stiff and speechless, and had to be drawn along by two of his hardiest companions. So they advanced, confident they were headed right, though they could see nothing save here and there the trunk of a tree, against which they more than once precipitated themselves in their haste and indifference to all obstacles.

Dr. Cameron, who had never known hardship, suffered bitterly under this strain. But his will was indomitable, and his purpose one to uphold the faintest heart. He had started in the company of two men whose faces he had liked, and who seemed to have more vigour than the rest. But by the time the dark had really set in, he found himself ahead of these and joined to another stranger, who, seeing him stop a moment for breath, thrust out an arm and linked him to

himself. This touch, and the evidence of fellow feeling which it gave, seemed to work a miracle in him. He felt a goodly portion of his strength revive, and though he could not speak his gratitude to the man beside him, he pressed his arm and showed by his lifted head that he had received encouragement to advance.

The remaining men, who for some reason seemed to be increased in numbers, did not again come up with these two. Though they continued to struggle on, they gradually, one by one, fell further and further to the rear, till they were lost to view behind the great drifts through which Dr. Cameron and his energetic companion still toiled. And the snow did not let up for an instant, and the wind was like all the demons of power and fury let loose.

"Can we do it?" gasped the doctor, with a longing look at a huge snow pile, in which it would have been such luxury to lie down and sleep. But his words were lost in the heavy coating of ice that enveloped his mouth, and he gained no response but the vigorous clasp of his comrade's arm, which in itself was at once a support and promise.

"O God," was the next cry that rose in his heart, "if she were to see me in her dreams!" And a gush of softened feeling swept for the first time in many hours through his heart, and made him tremble so that his steps grew weak and he would have fallen, had it not been for that ever-ready arm within his.

The night had now settled down completely, but instead of this being an added misfortune it turned out a boon. For somewhere, in a house or in some wandering man's hand, they saw a light, and dim and distant though it was, they beheld in it a harbinger of life, and followed on, as they hoped, to warmth and refuge. And now with this beacon before them, they fought a little longer, tearing the ice from before their nostrils at every few steps, and clinging together as they pressed their way through drifts that were often up to their breasts. But the light suddenly went out, and though they called aloud for help, or tried to do so, they got no reply, nor did they ever learn whence the light had shone which had been their sole encouragement for that dreary quarter of a mile.

"It is the experience of a wilderness," thought Dr. Cameron

to himself. "And if we live to reach the village there will be no returning from it."

And for a little while that "if" assumed portentous shape in his mind, for he felt the numbness of a deadly chill creeping over him, and was conscious that no amount of assistance on the part of his companion would avail to save him if he once sank to the ground. But he fired his soul with the thought of Molesworth being in the same town with his wife, and crying to every fibre in his body, "You shall not succumb," he trod heavily forward, dragging after him in his new found zeal, the weightier frame of the man who up to this minute had always held the pace before him.

But suddenly he found himself pulled up standing. Opening his eyes (he had held them shut during the last minute or so, in order to ease them from the sting of the biting sleet) he looked about. They were on the brink of a rapid and turbulent stream, and he was rushing pell-mell on, and only the caution of his comrade had saved him. Shuddering now with something besides cold, he drew hastily back. Were they at the end of their journey, then? Had they struggled and suffered and risked a hundred deaths for this? He felt his courage shaken to the roots, and leaned against his companion for a moment, wishing he knew his name that he might trust him with a message to that wife whose face now rose before him, sole and simple, as the most angelic thing he had seen in life.

Suddenly he felt himself gripped still more tightly by his companion and drawn along towards the right. He followed, but he had no longer any interest in himself or any special desire for succour. All he thought of was rest, and if he had been left to himself he would certainly have sunk to the earth. But he was not left to himself, and in a few minutes he heard a sudden hollow and ringing sound, then another and another, that surged through his dreaming ears like the peal of an awakening trumpet. It was the clatter of a desperate man upon a door. Roused in spite of himself, he lent his efforts to those of his companion, and together they put their shoulders to the senseless and resisting wood, and in an agony of effort started it from its hinges and sent it toppling in upon the floor. A gulf of darkness greeted them, but in it was shelter, and comparative warmth. Feeling a great flood of

thankfulness pour through his heart, Dr. Cameron helped his comrade to place the door back in its former position, then he stumbled forward with him into some sort of a room, and after a moment of semi-unconsciousness, regained enough mastery over himself and his benumbed fingers to draw his match-safe from his pocket and strike a light.

"I want to see the face of my protector," said he, and held up the burning match between himself and the man through whose energies he had been sustained and brought to this spot.

As he did so, a cry of indescribable emotion broke from either lip. The two faces confronting each other were those of Dr. Cameron and Julius Molesworth!

CHAPTER XXXI.

MAN'S PASSIONS.

THE blow was too much for Dr. Cameron's exhausted strength. He fell like a log. When he came to himself the haziness of a dream was still upon him, and through this haziness he met a pair of eyes that turned away from him as he looked, and and left him free to gaze about upon his strange surroundings.

Could he have remembered where he was he would have wondered. Not remembering, he thought himself in some weird and unknown region from which come the inspirations of the poet and the dread reality and unreality of our dreams. For in the space about him there were no familiar objects, but rather the scenery of some cave or Norseman's hut. By the vivid firelight which shone from a hearth out of his view, he could see but not understand, the great shadows of four rough-hewn pillars, which supported a roof of rudely plastered beams; while from the sides about him flapped the skins and hides of animals, which if meant to add warmth to the spot, did it with an effect that was rather repelling than comfortable. As for the floor, it was damp and earthy; while the rude bench and table that encumbered the only open spot

before him were of the shape and clumsiness of those times when each man manufactured his own articles from the wood which grew before his door.

He was lying on a settle as rough as the rest, and the first thing which brought him any really natural sensation was the sight of another man's overcoat thrown over his chilled and well-nigh benumbed limbs. This brought him some faint memory of suffering and rescue, and in another instant a subdued sound from the other end of the hut or cellar, recalled, with a terrible rushing sense of recoil and anguish, the whole situation to his mind. Rising on his elbow, he furtively searched the spaces about him for the man who occupied the fearful position of his sole companion and most hated foe.

He saw him crouched forward on the hearth, feeding the fire with careful hand from a pile of wood at his side. He was without his overcoat, and the sleet having melted from his hair and face there was no mistaking the stern profile, with the incomprehensible flashes of expression coming and going upon it, as the glow of the fire increased to a flame or died down to the dull red which invited further fuel.

"A demon or an angel?" thought Cameron, and stretched his limbs to see if he had strength to rise. But the effort was as yet too much for him, and he lay for a few minutes longer, listening to the wicked howlings of the storm and longing, while he dreaded, to catch the sound of a cry without, which should assure him of the approach of some other member of the party which they had left struggling along behind them. But no such cry came, and ere long the passions in his breast became too great for concealment, and throwing himself to the ground, he strode across the four black shadows made by those ghostly pillars on the earthy floor, and approaching Dr. Molesworth, who rose as he advanced, said,—

"To what interposition of Providence do I owe this meeting, Dr. Molesworth? I thought you took the train ahead of me?"

"I did," was the short reply, "but the two trains are stalled in the same gap. It is a miserable encounter."

"On the contrary," exclaimed Dr. Cameron, exultantly, "Heaven is kind, and I acknowledge its mercy. You cannot escape me now, Dr. Molesworth."

The other looked at him for a moment, sighed, and shook his head.

"You do not know what you say," declared the latter. "Better that the storm had buried us, or buried *me*, than that we should have come together in this hour. Let us play the part of wise men, then; be as perfect strangers till Providence grant us the opportunity to separate and depart upon our several ways."

The face of Dr. Cameron glowed with frenzy in the fire-light.

"Separate? depart?" he cried. "Do you think I will ever let you go out of my sight till I tear the secret from you which is threatening my home and imperilling the safety and honour of my wife?"

"What—what do you mean?" queried the other, with the first signs of faltering Walter Cameron had ever discerned in him. "I know of no secret——"

The gesture of his opponent stopped him: Dr. Cameron had become terrible in his wrath and denunciation.

"Don't lie," he protested, slowly. "I have not left my insensible wife and braved the terrors of such a storm as this to listen to any weak denial of the truth. If you hate me——"

Dr. Molesworth smiled.

"If you love my wife——"

Dr. Molesworth gave a violent start.

"You will not crush me or gain her by keeping back the secret which you have flown to conceal. The police have made some strange discoveries, Dr. Molesworth, and it is no longer you they suspect of Mildred Farley's death, but my wife, the woman whom you——" He did not finish; pride had again obtained mastery over his more turbulent passions.

The fire was getting low; Dr. Molesworth turned and replenished it.

"These are strange revelations," he remarked. "Will you be pleased to make them more explicit?"

"I will; I have come here for that purpose."

In his absorption Dr. Cameron forgot where he was, and that he was not confronting the man before him in the place where he first expected to find him. "My wife has spoken, sir; forced by the police, she has disclosed the fact that this

girl died, not, as you swore, in the public streets, while being driven home by you in your phaeton, but in *her* presence and in the house of Mr. Gretorex, in St. Nicholas Place. She has also related how you were connected with the affair, and told how you came to her rescue in the disposal of the body."

A long silence was his first answer. Then the doctor's stern lips moved, and he exclaimed in firm, low tones:

"And she is ill, you say?"

"Very ill."

"And you want me——"

"To satisfy me on a point that is killing me.—Wait! you are not going to escape me."

Dr. Molesworth, who had started towards the door, stopped, listened to the roaring wind, and sank with melancholy resignation on the rude bench.

"And what point is that?" he asked.

Dr. Cameron came and stood before him.

"Whether my wife, the woman I have married, was the simple witness of Mildred Farley's death, or whether she, in the extremity of some emotion which we will not discuss at present, offered to her visitor the draught which—which. You know what I mean. Do not force me into the torture of speaking what it is madness only to contemplate."

"And—" Dr. Molesworth's voice was very low, it was almost lost in the shrieks and wails of the surrounding tempest—"And what makes you think that I can answer this terrible question? If Mrs. Cameron told you the truth concerning my part in this unhappy business, she must have made it clear to you that I did not enter her presence till after the girl lay dead."

"I know it; but you saw her with the first flush of her terror upon her. There is confession at such moments. *What did her manner confess?*"

The look of Cameron, his attitude, and the tone in which he uttered these words were terrible. Julius Molesworth recoiled before the picture he saw, and for a moment did not know what to reply; then he said,—

"Have you so little confidence in your wife——"

The other broke in furiously.

"Confidence! when she only married me to escape the hell which your indifference opened before her? Confidence!

when you can write her, after two months' union with me, letters which——"

The other's eyes had now daunted him. He paused, panting, and Molesworth, seizing his arm with a grip which reminded him of all he owed him of safety as well as pain, rejoined:

"You are talking riddles now. What do you mean by saying she married you to escape my indifference; and what is this talk about my writing letters to her, when I have never addressed her in my life!"

The wrath of Dr. Cameron heard only the last assertion.

"You deny," he cried, "that you addressed a letter to Mrs. Cameron during this last week, in which you declare that your former passion for her was but a shadow, a vanity; that only now do you love——"

"Walter?" The tone was softness itself. Dr. Cameron looked at him in bewildered surprise. "You are labouring under some strange misapprehension. I wrote a letter, but I never sent it, and it was addressed not to Mrs. Cameron but to you. If you do not believe me, it is in my pocket now." And with hasty hand he drew from a long, narrow wallet he carried, an unsealed letter, which he placed in the fingers of his astounded companion. "Read it!" he cried, drawing him up to the fire, which he again replenished.

But Dr. Cameron could not. The letters danced in mad gyrations before his eyes. After an attempt or two he stood up from the crouching position he had taken, and staring helplessly at the other, slowly shook his head.

"Walter?"—the familiarity seemed to be justified by the feeling which prompted it. "I have but one plea to make for what may have unconsciously offended you in this business. It is that of an honest, straightforward, manly love for *you*, the first man who has ever filled my ideal of disinterested goodness. Since you took my place at Bridget Halloran's side, and without consideration of the opprobrium which a failure would have cost you, adopted my diagnosis and administered my remedies, always with the understanding that the glory of the success should be mine in case success followed, I have adopted you as my brother, and given to you the most genuine affection of my heart. For though by nature cold, I can love two beings without reserve or limit,

and they are the woman who was my mother, and the man who was my friend."

"But——" Dr. Cameron began, lost in the maze of this strange and unexpected revelation, "there was another woman for whom you once professed a passion—the woman who has since become my wife."

The eyes which had been fixed upon him with persuasive gentleness, suddenly flashed with an incomprehensible fire, then sank and veiled themselves hurriedly from sight.

"Did she tell you——" he commenced.

"I have read her letters; letters written to you while I thought her my betrothed wife, and prepared heart and home for her occupancy. They were never sent, but they reveal in all its details the plot entered into by her sister and herself, by which the dressmaker, Mildred Farley, was to be foisted upon me as my bride, while Genevieve——"

Dr. Molesworth's face had turned the colour of clay. He grasped the other's hand and looked at him fixedly.

"Oh, I know it was not carried out," the other affirmed. "You had expected to marry the great lady, and could not find her in the humble sewing-girl that presented herself before you. I do not blame you for that, but the fact remains that she married me while loving you, and this before the touch of your hand had had time to cool upon her palm, or before the breath of her dead sister vanished from the house where she had hoped to triumph as a wife."

"It is a tragedy!" quoth Molesworth, "a fearful tragedy." And he listened as if he hoped to hear some lulling of the storm which kept him prisoner with this man.

Dr. Cameron cared nothing for gale or tempest.

"She has been a fond wife," he went on. "Not knowing or suspecting anything of this secret history of hers, I allowed myself to love her, and when I saw the police hot upon her track, I crushed down every doubt till I heard of this letter you had written. Then, thinking it was her beauty which had invoked it, each and every argument used by the police recurred to me with double force. But you say the words were written to me and not to her? It is a blessed declaration, Molesworth; for if she is pure of the evil I feared, why may she not be equally innocent concerning the more heinous offence of which the police accuse her?"

His look was so earnest, his relief so unquestioned, that Julius Molesworth unconsciously sighed.

"She is very dear to you," he murmured. "Something more than your pride has suffered in this strait."

Dr. Cameron shuddered, turned his face away for a moment, then cried out impetuously,—

"I love her. Strange as it is for me to acknowledge it to you, she is my very life and soul. I shall be but a wreck if crime, or but the shadow of crime, is brought home to her, and that, not because my career will be blasted, and every man's finger pointed in curiosity and derision towards me, but because of the destruction of my ideal and the worse than hellish revelation of the true character of one I have held in rapture to my heart."

"I understand; though I have never loved——" Molesworth paused and bit his lip. "Pardon me," he entreated, in a certain manly confusion; "I have so forgotten any feeling that I once imagined myself to have cherished for Genevieve Gretorex that I am careless, perhaps, in my allusions. I mean only well by you, Dr. Cameron, as God, who has saved us from this biting storm, is our judge."

"I believe it; though an hour ago my heart was full of hatred, you have conquered it, and I am willing to trust life and honour with you. You will go back with me, Julius; you will stand up with me before the police and help me to prove to them what you must surely believe, that the woman to whom you lent such wonderful and unprecedented aid in her terrible difficulty, was no vile murderess, worthy of nothing but your reprobation and hate, but an innocent and unfortunate being, whose greatest crime was her determination to regain her own identity, even at the cost of her ambitious sister's hopes."

"I long to serve you," the other declared, "but I cannot do it in this way. If by staying in town and facing the police and their questions I could have benefited you or saved her, do you think I would have slid away from my patients and a freshly-opened line of practice to hide my hopes and my ambitions in a miserable country cottage, where even intelligent intercourse with my fellows was denied me?"

"But—but you feared for yourself? You have committed perjury, and—and——"

"I fear nothing for myself. Since I have known you I have had but the one wish, to save you distress and humiliation. Read the letter I have written you. Had I sent it you might not have been here. But I waited till the danger seemed more threatening, or till I knew for certainty that a long and continued sacrifice would be necessary on my part."

With a mechanical movement of his head and hand, Dr. Cameron endeavoured to obey. Turning the letter towards the flame of the fire, he stilled the demons of apprehension that were again making havoc with his self-possession, and managed after a moment or two to read these lines:

"DEAR DR. CAMERON,

"You will pardon the presumption of these words when I tell you they are from a very unhappy man to a much honoured one. You know what you have done for me, but you cannot know the feelings to which your kindness has given rise. They are strong; they are vital; they are absorbing. Never have I known before what it was to regard any human being above my work and my ambition. What I once called love was but a shadow, a vanity. This only is the one great feeling of my life, and if it seems unmanly and presumptuous in me to avow it, you will pardon me for the sake of what I am willing to do to preserve your honour and your happiness. Love makes light of sacrifice, and it is love I have felt for you ever since you so generously came to my assistance at the moment of my greatest necessity. If, then, I *disappear*, do not let the fact make you indignant or unhappy. It will be for your sake, and therefore for my own, who am your truest well-wisher,

"JULIUS MOLESWORTH."

"Destroy this, and do not retain so much as a memory of its contents."

The letter fell from Dr. Cameron's hands. Julius Molesworth at once thrust his foot forward and pushed it into the flames. In the light of its burning the two men again confronted each other.

"And this means——" gasped Walter.

"That you do not want me to go back with you to New York. That intercourse between us is dangerous; that when

this wind ceases, and a path can be found through the wilderness without, I shall vanish from your presence; to what hiding-place you must never know; nor must you, if you value honour or happiness, attempt to follow me."

Though the fire had died down almost to ashes, there was still glow enough to show the despairing pallor which had overspread Dr. Cameron's face at these words.

"There can be but one interpretation to put upon this language," he declared. "You have evidence, or you have belief——"

The grip of Molesworth's hand on his was like a vice.

"Do not continue," he charged him. "Do not ask me to explain myself. Silence between us is our only safety now that you know I am a runaway simply in your own interests, and that the bond between us is one of regard rather than of shame."

"But Genevieve——"

The name fell like an icy bolt between them, making for the moment a terrible silence. Then Molesworth finished the sentence by declaring,—

"Will never be prosecuted on any bare suspicion. While I remain absent, doubt will always hover about the case, and trammel the efforts of those engaged in its investigation."

"But if they find you?"

"They shall not find me. I have an extra incentive now to keep out of their reach: you have heard my avowal of regard and have not repulsed me."

Dr. Cameron, awed by the feeling expressed in these words, was silent. Then his own poignant misery got the mastery of him, and bowing his head forward into his two hands he exclaimed,—

"And so my every dream dies! My wife is——"

"The woman you are bound to cherish," broke in the tender, almost solemn voice of the other.

And before the stricken and almost overwhelmed husband of Genevieve Cameron could sink upon the settle from which he had so lately risen wretched and wild, but in a condition more hopeful than now, the other had crossed the floor, and mounting upon the rounds of a small ladder fastened against one side of the wall, disappeared through a trap into the darkness of the story above.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Q.

Dr. Cameron, left to himself, fell into a sort of miserable stupor, from which he was only aroused by the chill occasioned by the dying down of the fire. Bestirring himself, as he realized that he was fast becoming numb, he rose, piled on fresh fuel, and, passing to the door, moved it a little from its position, and endeavoured to look out. But the rush of snow was too blinding, and he was staggering back from the aperture, when he heard a cry, whose smothered and despairing tones assured him that another of his comrades was perishing in the snow almost within reach of his arm.

Without any thought but that of his duty to a fellow-sufferer, he rushed back to the fire, plucked out a half-burnt brand, and, waving it to make it burn brighter, tore down the door and thrust the glowing signal out into the darkness. It burnt but a moment under the influence of the driving snow and wind, but that moment was sufficient. For, in a space of time too short for Dr. Cameron to realize what he had done, there came a gurgling sound of speech, then a hurried rush of some panting human form, and a man tumbled headlong into the opening, and fell, mute and incapable, on the snow-covered floor.

Dr. Cameron at once bestowed upon him the care which Dr. Molesworth had given to him. He drew the man before the fire, and, after replacing the door, which he had thrown down in his hurry, he took such measures to resuscitate him as time and opportunity afforded. He was speedily rewarded by a decided movement of the spare but energetic limbs, and a shrill but grateful "Thank you," which almost made his heart stand still, for he thought he recognized his voice.

Stooping down, he looked the man hastily in the face, and drew back, stunned; for it was not only that of the lounger who had constantly obtruded his presence upon him for the last forty-eight hours, but in the eye and around the corners of the mouth he detected an expression which at once revealed

to him that this man had a more intimate connection with himself than he supposed, and that, if he had met him at every turn which he had lately taken, it was because the man had made a business of following him.

"You are a detective, are you not?" asked Dr. Cameron, with all the *sang froid* his sinking heart could muster.

"At your service," acknowledged the other, rising, and stamping his feet with an energy in forcible contrast to the shiftless air he had found it convenient hitherto to assume. "Glad to find you are safe, sir. I began to think we were all done for. Never have I seen such a storm—never in all my life."

Dr. Cameron did not answer. He was thinking of the man above, and wondering if he knew what a dangerous occupant had intruded into their refuge.

"But we are mighty comfortable here. There seems to be a pile of wood over there by the hearth, and if I could find a bite now——"

"Wait," cried the doctor, for the man, in his newly-recovered spirits, showed a dangerous intention of investigating the place in which he found himself; a proceeding which could not fail to carry him to that spot where the ladder ran up the wall. "I want to ask you a question or two. In the first place, how did you come here? I left you at S——."

"Very likely, but I am one of the kind that don't stay left. I've an interest in you, and the way I show interest in a man is to keep as near him as possible. I slept in the same hotel with you, sir, and took the same train. We've had a pretty serious time of it, but we're all right now, and I don't propose to regret my part of the job."

Dr. Cameron looked him gravely in the eye. "Are you from New York?" he asked, "and have you been following me ever since I left that city?"

"Pretty much, sir. But that don't count. As long as it was with friendly intentions, you can't object to an attention that has always been respectful, I trust."

"No, but what I want to be assured of is that they are friendly. You are doubtless in the employ of the police, but were you sent here to act as a spy upon me, or to assist me in my endeavours to find Dr. Molesworth?"

"Can you ask after all that has happened? Why, sir, with-

out me you wouldn't have got track of the villain at all, or if you had, you would have found yourself looked upon with suspicion as an agent of the police. No, sir ; I may not have done much, but I have done enough to show you I am here to assist you in your search ; and if this storm had not come on, he would never have escaped us. As it is—Haloo !" he exclaimed, "what sort of a place is this?" He had just caught sight of the peculiar paraphernalia of the spot.

"That is more than I have been able to find out," answered the doctor. "It is a refuge and that is all that concerns us."

"But the pillars, the table, the bench, and then those skins ! It looks like a cave, but what cave ever had a hearth like that !"

"It is the cellar of a man's house, or so I suppose," Dr. Cameron hastily added, as he saw the detective's eyes flash upward to the ceiling. "But all we have got to do with it, I suppose, is to rest here till morning. Lucky for us if the owner does not appear and turn us out."

"The owner? so the place has got an owner. Well, let him come ; I don't think he will turn *me* out. I wonder where he keeps his grub."

"Wouldn't it be better to ask whether or not there are any more poor perishing creatures straggling about in the storm near our door?" suggested the doctor, with some vague idea of there being safety in numbers. "Was there no one near you when you made yourself heard at the door? More than a dozen men set out from the cars."

"I know it, but I soon lost track of even you, sir. Every man for himself in a fight of this kind. But where is your companion?"

"My companion?"

"I see two overcoats here, sir ; you didn't wear them both yourself?"

Dr. Cameron glanced at the floor beside the settle, and, sure enough, there lay the coat which Julius Molesworth had thrown over him. He found it difficult to speak, but he did, and that with a carelessness which astonished himself.

"Oh, there is another man here," he acknowledged, "one of the passengers who stumbled along with me in the storm.

He has gone upstairs; I suppose there is some kind of a room up there."

"Haven't you been to see? What is the use of being in a hole like this and not making your investigations? Where are the stairs?"

"I have not taken the pains to look. I am content to take the good the gods provide."

"You are not 'Q the curious,'" laughed the other. "I never stay in a spot five minutes without knowing it from top to bottom. That's my business," he explained; "and more than that, it is my nature."

"Q?" repeated the doctor, vaguely.

"My name—short for Query—Living interrogation point I am called."

Cameron eyed him, saw he was like no man he had ever met before, and dropped all hope of controlling him.

"It's an odd name and a not to be envied nature," he observed, "but that is no affair of mine. If you did not have it, I suppose you would not be useful as a detective."

"There you have it, sir. And to be a good detective is meat and drink to me, and more. I have ambition to take Mr. Gryce's place when he is laid up. There are those who say I will. But all this is not supper, and supper is what I am after; so here goes for a peep into the rooms above, for there is certainly nothing here."

He would have gone, and Dr. Cameron could not have stopped him without invoking the very suspicion he was desirous of avoiding, if at that moment there had not risen shouts from without and a harsh voice crying,—

"Hurrah! here's old Harvey's hut!" Which exclamation was followed by a noisy rush and the blustering of wind, as three men staggered against the door and knocked it down in their frenzied entrance.

It was an inruption like that of the Goths and Vandals, but it served as a diversion to the detective, and this was much to the now thoroughly agitated doctor. Taking advantage of the excitement, he managed to steal away, and ere long found an opportunity for hastily mounting into that region of mystery and darkness, amid whose depths lay hidden the man whose name and identity it had now become the one imperative necessity of his life to conceal.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT.

THE space into which he stepped was perfectly dark, but trusting to his knowledge of such places, he knelt down, and feeling for the ends of the ladder, discovered that they were fastened by hooks to an iron rung set in the floor, and that they could be easily detached, and the ladder drawn up. He accordingly took advantage of this fact to cut off communication from below, and laying the ladder down in the hall, which appeared to be just long enough to receive it, he proceeded to strike a match, satisfied that the prying Q, as he called himself, would not be able to follow him.

The flame given out showed that he was in a narrow hall flanked by two doors. Trying the handle of one, he found that the key had been turned in the lock, and concluding that it was in this room that Molesworth had found refuge, he passed to the other and succeeded in opening it just as his match went out. Striking a fresh one, he took a short survey of the apartment in which he found himself, and perceived that it was, as near as he could judge, dining-room, kitchen, and larder combined. He also saw there were candles on the tall mantel-shelf, and hastily lighting one, he experienced for the first time since he left the cars, the feeling of reality that accompanies the sight of every-day objects.

And yet the apartment thus revealed was not of the ordinary type. Like everything else about the curious structure, it bore the impress of oddity, and though comfortable enough, had the look of a place into which a woman had never stepped. And, indeed, I believe that Dr. Cameron found out afterwards that this was the case ; that the house had been built, furnished and inhabited without the counsel or presence of the softer sex ; that it was, indeed, a hermit's cell, and as such was eschewed by all persons of a companionable disposition.

The owner, however, though peculiar and unsocial, was not without some taste and admiration for the beautiful. In this anomalous room for instance, where pots and pans confronted

a huge sofa and a shelf full of curious books, there was a bronze figure of such exquisite proportions that it caught the eye of this uneasy man and awakened something like a pleasurable sensation within him. Then the andirons on the hearth, and above all the tiles upon which they stood, were fine enough to have graced a dwelling with decided pretensions to elegance. And what was perhaps the strangest feature of all, each and every object was, to all appearance, in its own place, and was, as far as one could judge by such a light, scrupulously neat.

All this seen, though not perhaps as fully noted as I have suggested here, Dr. Cameron crossed the hall again to the opposite room. Anxious to communicate with Molesworth, yet fearing to risk any seeming collusion with him, he stood for a moment hesitating whether to knock or call, when, suddenly the murmur of voices rising from below, grew perceptibly louder, and fearing to attract attention by his light, he drew back into the room from which he had come and shut the door.

But no sooner had he done this, than he felt an inexplicable uneasiness. Somethingseemed to be going on in the hall beyond which he ought to see, and though he knew such fears were folly, he finally succumbed to them sufficiently to re-open the door, when to his real astonishment—for he had expected to see nothing—he perceived the good-humoured visage of the very man whose surveillance he was endeavouring to escape, protruding upwards through the trap.

"Halloo!" cried that gay and easy personage; "there is nothing like a light body and a curious mind. One more boost there," he shouted down to the man on whose shoulders he evidently stood. "So! Now your hand, governor," and by the aid of Dr. Cameron, who did not dare to withhold his assistance, much as he would have preferred to have tripped the man back into his hole, he finally clambered up through the trap and landed on the floor at Dr. Cameron's side.

"Well, here I am! No flies on me, governor," was his first exclamation. And he flashed about him a piercing look which, while different in its character from that of Mr. Gryce, was yet fully as acute in its way. "You see I smelled fodder, or thought I did; and finding that the fellers below were willing to trust me as a scout, I followed your example. But how

did you get up here? You had no man's shoulder to climb up by, and—Oh, I see; a ladder. And you pulled it up after you, eh? A mean dodge, governor," he laughed, "mean!"

Dr. Cameron, who by this time had called together his wits, laughed with a very tolerable simulation of mirth.

"Do you think I was going to run the risk of a poor night when I could have a good one? This room will accommodate itself very nicely to the wants of one man, but it would not do so well for the three I saw come in down below."

"Oh, I don't say but what you understand yourself. Only"—he was peering about in closets and boxes while saying all this—"now I'm here I think I'd better stay. I'll just curl up on the floor there and give you no more trouble than a bug in a rug. Oh, I don't snore; I'd never do for a detective if I did."

"Have you found anything to eat?" inquired the doctor, putting the best face he could upon the matter.

"No," growled the other, with a slam of the cover down on a crock he was examining. "Crumbs of ginger-bread and a jar of pickles, with flour in plenty and beans by the quart; but nothing cooked, not even crackers. Well, it's a tough spot this."

And going to the trap, he called down:

"No go! On my word of honour there isn't anything here worth a bird's pecking at. But to-morrow we'll have *beans;* there's half a bushel here—uncooked."

The answers he received may be easily imagined, but they did not provoke him. He had a word for everyone, and though he raised a fresh storm of suspicion when he announced his intention of remaining where he was, he met their various innuendeos with such display of wit, and lent such a sparkle of light-heartedness and mirth to what might possibly prove a very serious situation, that the babble of voices soon grew still, and he was finally allowed to carry out his projects, if he had any, without opposition or interference.

Meanwhile, the doctor was picturing to himself the dismay of Molesworth, imprisoned in darkness, and ignorant of just how much danger he ran of being discovered and forced from his retreat. Though perfect silence reigned in the spot where he stood, probably with his ear to the panels, Dr. Cameron was well enough assured of the character of his present com-

panion to be certain that he would not let that closed door remain much longer untried.

And the event soon proved his suspicions correct; for almost with the disappearance of his companions, Q glanced inquiringly at the doctor with the remark:

"That other one must have been as smart a man as you. He is in there, I suppose?"

"I don't know, but I have every reason to think so. As he is not in this room he must be in that. I hope he is warmer than we."

"I'm going to build a fire," exclaimed the mercurial fellow.

And thus was he again diverted from an investigation which might have led to results the most dreaded by the doctor. And so the evening merged into night.

It was one o'clock. Before the fire, which Q after much industry had succeeded in kindling for his own and Dr. Cameron's use, the latter lay, listening to the roaring of the tempest and sounding between his anxious starts at the vague noises which now and then came from the adjoining room, the depths of a misery which was now utterly unrelieved by hope. Near him, in a narrow recess made by the jutting of the chimney, slept Q, with his ear, as Dr. Cameron could not but notice, laid against the partition which separated their room from that occupied by Dr. Molesworth. Though he had no reason to think this was done intentionally, he was yet sufficiently disturbed by it not to let his eyes wander from the detective's face. Weird watching though it was, it gave him something to do, which to a man situated as he was, is much. The room was full of shadows, and though he did not observe it, there was one which stretched across the ceiling like a long arm reaching to clutch him. As he leaned forward to replenish the fire from time to time, this arm seemed to acquire purpose, and threatened and reached at him in a way that was truly appalling. Happily it was but a shadow.

It was one o'clock, as I have said, and the storm was still raging. But it had its lulls now, and in the comparative quiet made by one of these, the doctor was suddenly startled by the sound of a voice—from what quarter he could not at first realize—speaking in what seemed to him the hurried and unnatural tones of a dreamer.

"Is the hall light?—Very light.—No one on stairs.—Able

to reach street—Only keep cool—(*Here came a piteous moan*). Oh! oh! the glassy look of her eyes!"

Great God! what talk was this? Dr. Cameron felt his heart stand still, and stared at the detective as if to see if such words could come from him. But the idea showed itself false in an instant, for Q's lips remained silent, while the horrible jabber, now apparently smothered by distance, went on.

"How shall I carry her?—So?—No, no, no, face exposed—This better? Yes—but now hand hangs down. O God! O God!—what a task?"

It was Molesworth. No other man had such memories to unbalance him. He was living over the past, and saying in his sleep what the rack could not have extorted from him had he been awake. As the doctor realized this, with all the possibilities of discovery it entailed, his soul almost dissolved in dismay, and he scarcely dared to glance again toward the quiet figure of the detective, lest he should perceive him start from his place, with ears wide open to catch the revelations let fall by the unconscious dreamer.

And still the smothered and monotonous utterance went rapidly on.

"—Is very heavy—Not know dead bodies weighed so much—Must be her heart—like lead, lead."

Maddened, driven out of all command over himself, Dr. Cameron stirred and wildly threw up his arms. Should he rise, and with frenzied exclamations drown the words that were giving away the secret of their neighbour's personality, upon the suppression of which his whole honour and happiness depended. Or should he slide to the floor and with the silence and celerity of a shadow fall upon the detective and stop his ears, so that he should hear no more of these dread utterances.

Both expedients were those of frenzy, and neither of them remained in his mind for a moment. If Q were awake—and who could say he was not—the least effort of his to hush the dreamer would be noted and given its true interpretation. He must therefore curb himself; he must not only remain still but he must not appear to hear. Difficult, almost impossible task, yet he must perform it.

Dropping back his arms, he settled his head back on the sofa and shut his eyes in apparent sleep; and cold and icy as was the night, the perspiration started from every pore as he

heard that voice again, saying in accents to which horror now lent a hollow sound.

"Have handled many—Never held dead body to breast before. Horrible—gruesome—makes blood stand still in veins—Can't let it go—no stop now—sounds—music—laughter—Must creep with dreadful burden—step by step—stair by stair—down, down, down——"

There was silence. It was like a gulf into which every hope of the doctor sank. There was no denying now who the speaker was. But one man in all this community had secretly carried a dead girl out of a house of feasting and dancing. Molesworth was discovered, Molesworth would be taken back to New York, and she whom his evidence would destroy——

But that voice is speaking again,—final utterances, bitter and sad.

"My wedding night—never marry now—chill of this body sinks deep through heart and spirit—Shall never see anything but death in—brightest eye—sweetest smile—Genevieve! Genevieve!"

That name was all that was needed. Dr. Cameron could not keep his glance from wandering in anguish to the detective's face, and thought he perceived a difference in his expression. But as the moments went by, and that person neither moved nor spoke, the watchful physician began to allow himself to hope that his companion's sleep was real and not assumed. He on his part preserved the quiet into which he had steeled himself, drawing longer and deeper breaths till he felt sure that the detective, if awake, must be deceived into a belief that he at least was sleeping. He even carried his ruse so far as to let the fire die down, though the increasing chill was almost intolerable to one with limbs so benumbed as his. But all this produced no effect upon Q. He remained in the same unstudied position into which he had at first thrown himself, till the doctor felt certain that he had heard nothing, notwithstanding his boast of being a light sleeper. And being himself both physically and mentally at the last ebb, he finally let simulation merge into reality and fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

He may have rested an hour, he may have rested longer, when he suddenly awoke. There had been a movement in the room, and he had either heard it or felt it. With a clear

remembrance of where he was and the terrible circumstances surrounding him, he glanced towards the corner where he had left Q lying, and by the fading light of the candle, which had now reached its socket, discovered that the spot was empty. With a hasty turn of his head, he now looked towards the door in time to see the detective just disappearing behind it.

"He is going to interview Molesworth! I am lost!" thought the doctor. And reckless of consequences, he slid to his feet and carefully crossed the floor to the hall.

But before he got there he heard a very different sound from what he expected. Instead of that peremptory knock, or that quiet trying of the opposite door which seemed natural under the circumstances, there came the noise of the ladder being lifted and fitted to its place; and almost before the doctor could realize the happy circumstance, Q had placed his foot upon the top round and was rapidly descending out of sight and hearing.

Astounded at this unexpected move, and determined to profit by it, risk or no risk, Dr. Cameron waited only long enough to hear him cross the floor below, and then, bounding to Dr. Molesworth's door, shook it sharply, crying, "Open! open! I've a word to say to you. Don't delay for God's sake!"

Would he hear? Would he answer? The instant of suspense was horrible. But in a moment, almost with the sound of the doctor's voice, a light tread crossed the floor, the bolt flew back and the door opened.

"What is it? Who is the man and——"

"Hush! it is a detective. You have been talking in your sleep, and he must know you are in the house. Come out! creep down the ladder, hide yourself in a dark corner and await an opportunity for sliding out."

"I have a better means of escape than that. Keep him from this room till six in the morning, then let him enter. He will not find me here."

"How——"

"No questions. Let him come in, but don't let him remain. At six or after; but not a minute before." And with just a murmur of "Good-bye," Dr. Molesworth closed his door again, and the other heard the lock shoot back into its bolt and all was as before, save for the beating of the listener's heart.

"What can he mean? How can he escape?" were the questions that naturally flashed through Dr. Cameron's mind. "We are in the second story, and his room, if I do not mistake, overlooks the river, which is much too turbulent and wild to trust one's self to, even in the calmest of weather; while on such a night as this——" He did not pursue his thoughts, for he heard Q returning, but crept back to his couch, where he lay with wide open eyes till that personage appeared in the door, dragging a great skin which he had pulled down from the wall below.

"Did you think I was going to freeze with such a coverlid as this to be had for the taking?" he cried, catching the doctor's eye and laughing merrily. "I'm sorry to disturb any one, and I'm a little ashamed I didn't bring one for you too. But I'll go back if you say so; there's another prime one——"

But the doctor declined the proffered favour; he had an extra overcoat to keep him warm, and so the detective betook him to his corner again, and Dr. Cameron watched him as long as the light oi the candle lasted, and when that had gone out, listened, while the gale blew on without, coming now in great gusts and then subsiding, only to gather fresh strength and shake the house and the hearts of all within it with its relentless fury.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BALCONY.

It was still dark when Q threw off the skin in which he had wrapped himself and hastily arose. He was too cold, or so it appeared, for approaching the hearth, he hastily built a fresh fire, with a quick and careful hand. Dr. Cameron watched him from between the folds of the overcoat in which he had well-nigh enveloped his head. As the bright flame started up, the detective rubbed his hands gleefully and crouched down in pure enjoyment of the blaze; but as the warmth diffused itself through the room he rose again to his feet, and with just the shortest glance at the outstretched form of his secret watcher, drew near one of the windows and curiously peered

out. While his back was turned the doctor drew out his watch, and turning it so that the fire-light could play on it, eagerly looked at the time. It was half-past five.

The appearance of things without was evidently unsatisfactory to Q, for he shook his head as he left the window. The next move he made seemed suspicious to the doctor. Crossing to the door, he opened it, and stood there in a very thoughtful attitude. But his intentions, whatever they were, evidently changed, for he presently came back and began peering again into the closets from which he presently extracted such ingredients as he needed to make some sort of a dish for breakfast. About this he now busied himself with all the handiness of a professed cook, and Dr. Cameron, with his mind more at ease, watched him with as much amusement as interest, till some incautious move on his own part arrested the detective's attention.

Instantly the bowl into which he had been stirring what looked like flour, was laid down, and Q, advancing with a visible look of excitement on his face, cried,—

"Awake, sir? Good! I have a piece of news for you. Who do you think your friend is? The gentleman you have there in the next room?"

Dr. Cameron started, though he had expected some such inquiry, did not answer save by a look of mingled astonishment and inquiry.

"It is *he*, Molesworth, the man we are both in search of. How he came here I cannot imagine. Probably his train was stalled ahead of ours. But, however that may be, I am sure it's he, and only wonder how you escaped recognizing him when you saw him last night. But I suppose you were hardly yourself, and that he is in some sort of disguise."

The doctor made an incoherent reply, while the voluble fellow went on to say,—

"But he must have recognized you. Did you notice anything like surprise in his manner when he saw you?"

The doctor found his voice. "Yes, now I think of it," said he, "I did."

"I thought so; and he left you abruptly, forgetting even his overcoat, and came up here and shut himself in?"

"Yes."

"Well, *you* were not disguised, and the sight of you caused

him strange dreams. Oh, it's a go, and I don't wonder you look pale. It made me feel a little queer when I found we had treed our bear unexpectedly."

Dr. Cameron thought of his immobility under the discovery which he declared affected him so much, and asked himself how he, without losing his position as the determined pursuer of Molesworth, was to meet and baffle this seemingly careless but in reality, dangerously acute man, anxious to grasp at the fading honours of his great patron Mr. Gryce. It was difficult to see in that moment.

"Are you sure of what you say?" he asked, in his bewilderment and indecision.

"Oh, yes; his overcoat there has his mark on it. I did not have to disturb you to find the 'J. M.' under the collar."

Dr. Cameron's pale face turned red. He never felt more like crushing a man between his two fists than he did at this moment. But he kept all expression out of his face, and, turning to the coat, pretended to examine it.

"There is a J. M. or an I. M. under the collar sure enough; and now I think of it," he avowed, "there was something in the man's air and manner which convinces me it was Molesworth. Well, it will simplify our matters very materially. All we will have to do is to wait till he gets hungry. He will walk out then himself and——"

"Do you know," broke in the detective with a mysterious air, "that I should not be surprised if he did not get hungry till noon, nor till night, not for three days and nights if we choose to wait so long? Such men have a deal of pluck where their fears are aroused, and he knows that you are to be dreaded; that you are determined to have his evidence, and will stop at nothing to obtain it. He being equally determined not to give it will starve, but will not show his face."

"Not in disguise?"

"Pshaw! Molesworth can't disguise himself so as to pass muster in daylight, or even in close quarters. He knows that as well as I do, or else why didn't he come back for his overcoat?"

"True," returned the doctor, with a real pang, as he thought of Molesworth setting out in this bitter weather without it. "But what are you going to do? Force the door and make him show his face?"

"Yes, but I'll give him a decent chance to open it first. Oh, there's nothing mean about me: I will show him every delicate attention."

And with a laugh all his own, Q turned towards the opposite door, saying,—

"It's only common humanity to see that he is alive and well after such a night's storm."

Dr. Cameron followed with an eagerness in keeping with the situation, but it sprung from a source quite different from what Q naturally imagined. He had heard but a few instants before the sound of a key softly turning in a lock, and on consulting his watch, had found it was after six.

"Halloo!" cried Q, giving the door a sharp rattle. "Aren't you hungry in there? I am getting up some first-rate slapjacks. Come out and have some."

Silence, as both had expected.

"Are you frozen up? Has the night been too many for you? Speak, or I shall feel it my duty as a member of the humanitarian club to break in the door."

And still silence.

"What did I tell you?" whispered Q, in the ear of his anxious companion. And he was about to throw his weight against the door when the other quietly suggested that they try the knob first.

Q stared, but did so, when to his unbounded surprise it turned and the door opened.

"Not locked! and I have lain there four hours! Well, I didn't know I was such a fool," he exclaimed, as he bounded into the room.

The doctor pressed hastily behind him and both stood looking eagerly about them in the hope of being able to pierce the darkness without a light. They could just do it. A chair, a table, a chest of drawers soon made themselves discernible, and finally, in a dim corner, something that looked like a bed. Towards this Q instantly plunged.

"Halloo!" he cried, but in another moment hesitated, peered, and excitedly fell back. "Why, there's no one here!" he exclaimed, and began hastily looking about on the floor and poking into the corners as if he expected to find the missing witness curled up in some of the many shadows that lay about so thickly.

Meanwhile Dr. Cameron had drawn the deepest breath of his life, as he struck the last match which his little safe held.

"Can he have fled?" he asked, wonderingly, "or shall we find him down below?"

Q, taking the match from his hand, waited till he had lit a kerosene lamp on the table before venturing upon any reply. Then he remarked,—

"No man ever passes my door without my hearing him. He is either here or he has vanished in smoke." And his quick glances flashed hither and thither, but all to no purpose. "What does it mean?" he now asked, staring at the windows that were numerous, and finally letting his eye settle on a door in the wall opposite to the hall by which they had entered. "Is there a room beyond? or have we a closet here——"

He said no more, for upon opening the door, such a rush of snow and wind swept in that he was almost stifled and could barely catch his breath.

"The deuce!" came from his lips at last, as he wheeled about and faced the doctor. "What kind of a house is this? Here is a door that opens at the back of the house, and I'm sure I heard water flowing underneath. Can you hold the light——"

But at that word there was no light, the wind had blown it out.

Dr. Cameron, marvelling at what had occurred, and very anxious, slowly felt about for matches, and finding them, relit the lamp, while Q shut the door. But the moment the latter was opened again, the lamp went out as before, and they soon found that whatever investigations were made must be accomplished in the dark. They therefore drew back and consulted, for it was no every-day task to thrust one's self out into what looked like a gulf, but which might be merely a stair upon which waited a desperate man ready for any deed to save himself. Nor could Q, brave as he was, be expected to risk his life in an encounter where he would be at so palpable a disadvantage. He therefore hesitated, and the doctor seeing it, took heart, and proposed that they should wait for daylight, now so near at hand, before proceeding in the search. But Q, with that precipitancy which was at times his bane and at others the greatest factor in his success, was for satisfying himself then and there that Dr. Molesworth was

still within his reach. "For if he is not, if he has gone out into the storm, then you may whistle for your witness, for you'll never see him again—that is, not in any available shape suitable for getting evidence out of him."

The doctor, swaying with the swaying of the house, gasped nervously at this. Was it with sympathy for Molesworth, or because of a hope it called into life—a hope to which he dared to give no name?

"Let *me* go," he cried. "I am a bigger man than you, and——"

But Q would not listen to this either.

"No," said he, "I am in the way of my duty, and big or little I will not shrink."

And the doctor had to stand still in the horrid darkness of the room, grinding his palms together in his suspense, while Q made his brave attempt to penetrate the mystery of what lay beyond this swaying door. His first steps were taken with great caution, for though he speedily found there was a firm support for his feet, the gusts that blew by him were so powerful he was afraid of being swept off by them into the roaring waves he heard plunging below. But he soon found that even this danger was wholly an imaginary one, as the platform to which he was vaguely clinging was wholly surrounded by a railing fence, save at the sides, where a high boarding supported some sort of a roof. But this discovery, while adding to his sense of security, deepened the perplexity of a situation which had now become almost inexplicable to him. For the place he was on had resolved itself into a simple balcony overhanging a turbid and dangerous stream, and on this balcony there was no shadow or sign of any human being but himself. This was so apparent that he did not linger long upon it, but came back and told the doctor how little he had discovered.

Greatly satisfied, the latter at once rushed out on the balcony. But as soon as he found himself in the swirl of the tempest, he experienced such a feeling of revulsion at the thoughts to which its fury gave rise, that he turned back, and would have retreated in horror but that a power above himself seemed to hold him in check and bid him take one look into the darkness beneath. He did so and heard, or thought he heard, a sound that was not like the other sounds which had hitherto come to his ears. Yet he could not tell in what

the difference lay, nor determine whence they proceeded. Perplexed, he drew back, with a feeling of insecurity which made the very planks upon which he stood seem heaving under his feet. As he did so, he noticed how free the balcony was from snow, owing, probably, to its exposed position and the fact that it faced in such a direction that the wind continually swept it from end to end. His overcoat was white, however, and he came in as cold as if he had stood there an hour instead of a minute.

But he soon found he was capable of a greater chill yet. For just as he crossed the threshold he heard his name spoken in such suppressed tones, and from a quarter so mysterious, that whatever warmth was left in his veins vanished.

At the same instant Q's hearty voice spoke up from the dim interior, saying,—

"I am going to take a hurried look downstairs. Though it will be a new thing in my experience, he may have stolen by me and got down that ladder without my hearing him. At all events I may as well make sure." And without waiting for reply he put his own foot on the ladder, and with the stealthiness of a cat began his descent.

The doctor thus unexpectedly left alone with a mystery he was as far from understanding as Q himself, hesitated for a moment, then stepped again to the balcony.

"Molesworth!" he called, "are you there?"

He had not expected any reply, much less the appearance of the man thus summoned. He was therefore greatly shocked, and in a measure stunned when almost at the utterance of his name, a figure evolved itself out of the night and swirling snow, and coming forward, a shadow amid shadows, earnestly exclaimed,—

"Don't speak; I am here, but I must soon be gone. Get me my coat, Cameron, and bid me God speed, for we shall probably never meet again."

"But where have you come from? Where have you been hiding? Did you hang from the balcony by your hands?"

"No; there is a trap in it and a boat underneath; I have been lying coiled up in that. Though I know nothing of the owner, I must borrow that boat. It will at least land me on the other side of the river; and if it is destroyed you will see that it is paid for. It has oars, and being suspended here by block and fall I shall have no difficulty in lowering it into the

water. I should have attempted it at once, but I need light. As soon as the first glimmer comes I shall be gone. Only bring me my coat, and be careful that you keep the detective away from this side of the house till I am out of sight."

Dr. Cameron wrung the hand which was proffered him and dashed through the hall towards the room where he had left the coat. Dragging it from the settle, he had regained the door and was just reaching it across the hall to Molesworth when a light figure sprang between them, and peering into either startled face, laughed,—

"So, so; our friend has made his appearance has he? Well, that's good! We will have all the merrier breakfast."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CATASTROPHE.

Dr. Cameron, whose hopes were thus shivered in an instant, showed that instantaneous command over himself which is born of an extreme situation.

"Yes," he remarked in a dry tone, "Dr. Molesworth's appearance here in his own proper character is a surprise. But he doubtless knows the welcome he would receive and could stay away no longer, especially as he was cold without the coat which I have for so long a time selfishly appropriated. Cannot you find him a corner by your fire? Hanging from a balcony in a raging storm is calculated to chill a man even when he is made of such stuff as our good friend here."

"I should say so," burst from the astonished detective. "Has that been the form which your nightmare has taken this morning?" he inquired, with the utmost politeness, of the stern and silent physician.

The answer he received was a quick, almost horrified look, which had no sooner shown itself than it disappeared.

"I do not know you," returned Dr. Molesworth, coldly, "and do not even know your name. You will therefore not expect me to answer your impertinent questions."

At which Q shrugged his shoulders with the utmost good-nature and launched out into some merry story that if not entirely appropriate to the occasion, at least had the effect of

bridging over a moment of embarrassment, which was even greater and more full of intolerable emotions than his facile, but far from deeply observant mind, could suppose.

It was followed by a series of jests and good-humoured banter, as the merry detective, ushering them into seats by the fire, passed around and before them in his self-imposed task of getting up a comfortable breakfast. Nor did he stop with these. As the increasing daylight gave him the opportunity of catching Dr. Cameron's eye, he allowed himself the pleasure of indulging in numerous allusions highly amusing to himself, and, as he supposed, exceedingly gratifying to his companion. Dr. Molesworth must make himself at home. It was another man's house and another man's fuel they were enjoying; but that made no difference. It was as free to him as to them, and he must not think of going back into solitude again. Dr. Molesworth was on his way back to New York. Very good; so was he; they would go together. Indeed, he meant to make it so cosy here there would be no temptation for anyone to leave a spot where comfort was plenty and the society good. And so on and on, jest following jest, and laughter following laughter, till the noise brought up the three strangers from below, and any opportunity which the two doctors may have anticipated for momentary speech together, was lost.

Meanwhile the morning had advanced, revealing such a scene of stormy desolation as none of them had ever beheld in this part of the country. On all sides there was nothing to be seen but enormous drifts, save where the stream cut through. No house, no road, no token of human life anywhere, nothing but snow, snow, snow, on the earth and in the sky, and though the wind was perhaps less furious than in the night, it still swept the country with sufficient fierceness to make any thought of leaving their temporary refuge impossible. Indeed, they were by this time so completely hemmed in by drifts that simple egress would be difficult, and after one of the party had made the experiment of treading the snow that lay piled about the door, and found that it was of that light, powdery nature which allows you to sink to your knees at every step, they all settled down to the fact that they were in reality snow-bound, and must reconcile themselves to the situation with as much grace as a very meagre larder and a rapidly decreasing store of wood would allow.

Dr. Molesworth and Dr. Cameron alone knew of a means

of escape, and while they scrupulously avoided all communication with each other, they were both vividly conscious that each was thinking of the boat swinging under the balcony, waiting for the first adventurous hand that would find an opportunity of lowering it. But that moment seemed to have retreated indefinitely. For without being in any special way obtrusive, Q managed to be always on the scene. And thus the morning passed.

With afternoon there was a gradual letting up of wind and snow, but still the great wastes remained, untrodden and impassable. A serious question now presented itself. Where were they to get their supper? The dinner had been meagre, but supper promised to be *nil*. In vain Q searched the cupboards and boxes, not even a cracker was to be found. His apologies became profuse. He seemed to think that he was personally to blame for this lack, and when four o'clock came and he as well as the rest began to feel decidedly hungry, he rose from the seat into which he had thrown himself after his last ineffectual search, and saying, "There is the cellar to rummage next," went out of the room.

It was the first time he had given any token of an absence long enough to warrant either of the doctors in making any move. It was therefore seized upon with avidity by Molesworth. Merely waiting to hear the detective's feet strike the floor beneath, he bestowed one glance upon Cameron, and passed into the hall. But almost in a moment he returned with a bitterly changed face, and sitting down in his former place, made one movement with his lips, signifying "Locked." The wary detective had not left him without taking his precautions, and the way to the balcony was cut off.

While he and Cameron were slowly recovering from their mutual disappointment, Q returned. He had found no stores, yet his face was beaming. He held in his hands two barrel staves, and he startled them all with the cry,—

"Who's got a string? With these tied to my feet I can get to the village. What do you say, then; shall I try it?"

"Yes," came in chorus from all but the two doctors. It would not do for them to show the eager hope which had come to them at the utterance of these few words.

"I have looked out of the door and I can just see a steeple in the distance. With that to guide me I am sure I can get to town in an hour. Look alive for some string then, we

shall not go to bed supperless." And motioning Dr. Cameron to meet him outside the door, he whispered:

"You needn't bother about *him*. No one can make way through this snow without some such rig as I will get up, and I have hidden the other staves of the barrel in a very safe place. He may throw himself out of a window, but if he does he will stick in a drift, so we will have him any way. As for the balcony, I have the key of his room fast in my pocket; so you see you are bound to endure his company for some time yet. But I don't think that will be disagreeable to you, after the pains we have been at to obtain it." And the light-hearted fellow gave one of his peculiar laughs, and being by this time accommodated with string, took up his staves and began to clamber down the ladder, followed by two of his companions.

The two doctors left thus to their own devices, allowed themselves one word of congratulation. Then, that no time might be lost, Dr. Cameron stretched himself out on the settle and feigned to fall into a deep sleep. As this had been the recreation of more than one of the party during the long day, it caused no comment, not even when he failed to wake with the return of the two men who had been down to the door to see Q off. Nothing short of the violent bursting sound that came suddenly from the hall was sufficient to break his slumbers, and then he awoke slowly and looked about him with vague astonishment, before saying,—

"What is that? Is the roof tumbling over our heads?"

"Oh, no," cried one of the party indifferently; "it is that moody chap who was here. He wanted to lie down, too, and finding the door of the opposite room locked, just put his shoulder to the wood and burst off the lock. Some of us will have to pay damages for our abuse of this house, I imagine."

Dr. Cameron rose with great seeming precipitancy and passed into the opposite room. Molesworth was already on the balcony, and with a rare thoughtfulness of consequences, had locked the door behind him. For at all costs it must not only appear that Dr. Cameron was taken at a disadvantage, but he must be positively prevented from following or regaining his witness, or else this disappearance would militate against him and bring about the very catastrophe he hoped to prevent.

Understanding the trick, and being quite willing to profit by it, Dr. Cameron nevertheless followed the example given him

by the other and endeavoured to break down the door. But it was built more firmly than the interior one, and he soon ceased from efforts that in reality meant nothing. He did not quit the spot, however, but stood with bended head and listening ear, harkening for the creaking sounds which would announce that the boat was being lowered into the water. When it came, he felt such a gush of thankfulness that it was with the greatest difficulty he could restrain himself from uttering his gratitude aloud. It was therefore a terrible shock when next instant he heard a sudden snap, then a rushing sound, and then a splash which told him that one or more of the ropes had parted, and that the boat, the doctor, or both, had fallen into the stream.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RESCUE.

THERE are moments in which we live a lifetime in a second. Such was this instant to Dr. Cameron. Molesworth in the water! Molesworth struggling with death! That meant disappearance, indeed, and a disappearance from which there could be no return, either forced or voluntary. But though the devil tempted him as he had never tempted him before, Dr. Cameron did not linger long to listen to his fearful suggestions, but after trying the door again and finding it immovable, flung himself from one of the windows into the drifts below, and though buried almost to his neck in snow, fought his way clear till he stood on the ice-bound brink of the stream.

Here he had only to cast one glance at the rear of the house to see that it was the doctor, and not the boat, that had fallen. For the latter was still visible, hanging in a perpendicular direction from the balcony above, while of the former nothing was to be seen but his hat floating on the surface of the water.

Stifling a cry; for he was horror-struck, Dr. Cameron struggled out to the very verge of the bank and stood staring into the water, and staring, saw the inky waves part from a ghastly face, whose wide-open and appealing eyes shot such terror and remorse to his heart, that he waited not to calculate upon

his chances, but tore off his overcoat and plunged into the icy stream with no other thought than that of rescue.

But when after numerous efforts, made more difficult by the icy chill of the water, he had succeeded in laying hold of Molesworth's arm, he found that the struggle before him was likely to be one of life and death. For Molesworth was not only wholly unable to assist him, but was so heavily burdened by his two coats, that he drew him irresistibly downward, making the few strokes necessary to reach the shore almost impossible even to his practised arm. Indeed, he had almost given himself up for lost when the thought came that he had but to loosen his grasp upon this already half-dead man, and not only life, but love and hope would be his again, and that without any blame to himself. For what was this man to him that he should sacrifice his own safety in an attempt which, after all, was more quixotic than reasonable.

But this thought, plausible though it was, did not tempt him long, for he realized, even in that passionate moment, that he would gain too much for his conscience ever to rest at ease if he let this man go. So, renewing his grip, he gave himself up again to the struggle, and worked so manfully that he reached the spot where the boat hung down, and finding it near enough for him to gain some support from it, he clutched at it with one hand and held up Molesworth's head with the other.

The momentary relief thus brought, allowed him to look around him for the first time. But he saw nothing encouraging. Meantime a look like death was settling over Molesworth's face, and Dr. Cameron saw that if he was to complete his sacrifice and save this man, he must at once get assistance from his companions. But that meant discovery and all the incalculable results which must follow the restoring of this witness into the hands of the police—an alternative so dreadful that he cast his eyes in anguish up at the supports which still held the boat from falling into the water, in hope of seeing some way of detaching it, and so saving Molesworth without hindering the escape upon which so much depended. But one glance was enough to assure him of the futility of any such hope, so crushing down every instinct but that of duty, he gave one resounding cry that soon brought his companions to the window and thence to the side of the river.

An hour or two later Q returned. He had not been very successful in his undertaking, but he had a glimpse of the

outside world and came back full of life and spirits. Bursting into the house, he sent his voice through the cellar, crying:

"Where's the welcome I expected? Look here, you! Here have I been gone two solid hours in the worst scrabble you ever saw, and not a soul at the door to take my basket. I suppose you didn't expect me back so soon; thought I would be charmed by some of the pretty girls I might meet on the road picking flowers? But that's not the kind of dude I am. 'Straight ahead!' is my motto when I've anything to do, and I had plenty to do this time I assure you."

He had now kicked off the snow-shoes he had improvised, and receiving no reply to this tirade, hurried towards the ladder and came rapidly up.

"Are you all dead?" was his greeting as he popped his head above the trap. "Overcome by grief at my absence, eh? Don't, don't be so weak-hearted, my friends; I am here, and with me the choicest bits of sole-leather steak and stale bread that hungry men can want. Oh! this is a fine old town we have stumbled on. You can get most anything you want, for money enough—if only you don't want anything but hardtack and some rather lively old cheese. But what's up? you seem to be alive, and yet——"

"Two gentlemen have been in the water," now exclaimed one of the party, meeting him at the door of the room in which the fire was. "They are pretty well used up, but I guess we will bring them round."

With a cry not unlike a suppressed oath, Q dashed by him into the room.

"Dr. Cameron!" burst from his lips, followed by the still more emphatic exclamation of "Dr. Molesworth!" And his surprise having had its expression, he threw down his basket, and becoming at once physician and nurse in charge, busied himself in furthering the efforts already made towards restoring warmth and animation to his two benumbed and half-drowned companions, with as much fervour, skill, and judgment as if he had never done anything else in his life than tend the sick and re-animate the dying.

Not till he saw the two men comfortable again did he venture upon any inquiry. Then he gave Dr. Cameron a look.

"Was sneaking off, eh?" he whispered; "or did he think he would make way with himself?"

"No," answered Dr. Cameron in the ear bent down to him,

"he was only trying to escape. There was a boat it seems, strung up under the balcony, and while I was dozing here, he slipped from the room, broke in the door you locked and found his way out. But he wasn't used to such business, and in lowering the boat one of the ropes slipped out of his hands and he consequently fell into the water. I heard him and made after him like a shot, but it was desperate work, Q, desperate work."

"I believe you," returned the thoroughly deceived detective, glancing at the other pale face on the further side of the fire. "I'm only glad you are alive, sir. I'll get no credit for this job with the inspector. Not to know there was a boat hanging there! But it was the storm, sir, that kept me from making investigations. With such a hurly-burly in the air one does grow a little careless. But I shall never forgive myself notwithstanding; and as penance, I promise not to boast of my feats in this enterprise till I have forgotten they were not as highly creditable as yours. And that will be a trial, sir, for this storm affords one a big field for his imagination, and I could have reeled off a tale that would have made the boys stare. But we all have to deny ourselves in this world, especially if we want to advance." Then in a lower tone, "You are a doctor; don't you think he looks pretty bad over there? Don't you think we can trust him not to make any more efforts at escape?"

And Dr. Cameron, noting Dr. Molesworth's hollow eyes and stern but slightly fallen lip, felt justified in replying, "I think we can; all he wants, and all I want at present, is rest."

And rest was what they all seemed likely to enjoy for some time. For it snowed again that evening, and though the sun shone out on the morrow, there was no more prospect of travel than there had been the day before. Indeed, Thursday came and went before the roads were sufficiently clear for the owner of the cottage to come up from the village where he had gone on that memorable Monday merely to purchase provisions. And when he came—but I will pass over the scene with its growl and banter, merely suggesting that if the crabbed old curmudgeon ever found his match, it was in Q, and that on the contrary, if Q, ever found his, it was at this time and in this place, in the crooked, ugly, selfish old hermit Harvey, who felt that himself, and his effects also, were contaminated if another man so much as looked at

them, much less sat down in his chairs, and feasted from out his empty crocks.

On Friday the roads began to be cleared and the trains to run. The first that left, carried with it our two doctors and the now silent Q. As they quitted the spot where they had suffered so much, the doctors exchanged one long look. It was not the first. During the last two days they had been much together, and frequent had been their glances, though few had been their words. And in those glances a growing intimacy had arisen which was fast weaving their hearts together in those rare and indissoluble bonds which sometimes unite two men of opposite tastes, instincts and conditions. But they never forgot themselves, and never awakened the least suspicion in Q, who saw in them only enemies intent upon opposite schemes.

The ride to New York would have been interesting had they not been labouring under such tremendous anxieties. As it was, they scarcely noticed the unwonted aspect of the country till they reached the city itself; then they were forced into a recognition of the changes which had been made in the every-day scenes they knew, by this furious and unprecedented storm. Their experience, which they had almost thought unique, they found to have been a common one, not only in the suburbs of the city but in the city itself. While they were struggling through fields where the drifts threatened to overwhelm them, strong men were doing the same in the streets and parks of New York, and not always with success.

Arrived at the depôt, Dr. Cameron parted from Molesworth with a few polite words and a quiet bow. He knew that Q would not leave him to his own devices, and Molesworth knew it too. Though he might seem to be his own man, he would never in reality be so again till the police had obtained from him all that he knew.

It was this realization probably which gave his face such a melancholy look as he turned away from Cameron. At least, so the latter was forced to think when it rose before him again and again upon his journey home; and the thought brought him anything but comfort in the ordeal that lay before him. But he had got to that pass where he expected none, and went on his way because it was his way and there was no other to be trod. And thus he came to his own door and entered into those fresh anxieties which the sight of his

home would be apt to arouse after an absence of nearly a week, at a time so critical.

He rang the bell—somehow he did not wish to use his key—and when the door was opened, he saw by the look of the girl, that there had been no great change in his absence. Was it a relief? He did not know.

His inquiries proved that he was right, and the one glimpse of his wife which he allowed himself, satisfied him that the opinion of the nurse was correct when she said, "It will not be long now, sir. In a day or two we shall know what to expect. I almost fancy I see her move at this moment."

But what would happen in that day or two?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

DR. CAMERON wrote and sent the following note to the inspector that night :—

"I promised too much. I could not make Dr. Molesworth talk, though I did succeed in finding him and bringing him back to New York. If you have any better luck with him than I, please let me know."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE INSPECTOR SPEAKS.

THERE is a point beyond which a man cannot suffer. Dr. Cameron felt that he had reached that point. But when on his return from the breakfast-table the next morning, he saw the nurse standing at the head of the stairs with her finger pressed to her lip, he found there were possibilities of misery still within him.

"She has moved; she half lifted her arm and let it drop," came in a whisper down the stairs.

He answered not a word, but reeled into his office and shut the door. If a thousand hands had combined to push him into Genevieve's presence at that moment, he felt that he would have resisted them all. For at the sight of this woman waiting to address him, such a flash of hope had gone through

him that she would cry death instead of life, that he knew his faith had been shaken, and that he no longer looked upon his wife as the idol of his life, for whom every excuse should be made, and to whom all adoration should be offered.

But he was a strong man and did not allow this mood to hold him long. Soon, very soon, he was able to go upstairs; and once at her door, his professional coolness came to his aid, subduing not only all appearances of emotion but emotion itself, so that he entered calm and collected. Immobility had returned to Genevieve. She lay quiet, but her countenance had changed. Its look had deepened and sweetened inexpressibly, as if in straying near to life again she had strayed near to love. A profound impression was made upon him by this. Kneeling at her side, he gazed long and fixedly in her face. Could guilt lie behind such peace? Could a secret love for the man who was not her husband lend such light as this to her dreams? It was not in nature. But was any of it in nature? was not the whole dreadful story from his first knowledge of her till now a hideous distortion? His wife, this suspected criminal! His *wife*, this woman, who within an hour of marrying him had loved another man, and was only prevented by that man's indifference to her from practising upon himself the most unwarrantable of frauds? He stifled as he looked at her, and did not know whether to lean forward and embrace her in a passion of tears, or to turn his back upon her with horror and fly her presence and her memory for ever. The helplessness in which she lay was his only anchor. The wife might be forsaken, not the patient. He must remain at her side till health returned; and remain calm, careful and affectionate, lest the faint spark of life should perish in its socket. No flying now, no weighing of facts for or against her guilt, no lengthened broodings even over that insensate passion for another man which had led to all this evil, and which was, in spite of his brave defence of her before the police, aye, in spite of his growing regard for that man himself, the secret worm that was gnawing at his vitals and undermining his courage. No; all this must be abandoned. He must only look at her as at a human being requiring his care; and in this way he might get through the dreadful hours and reach that point when he could drop his mask and be to all eyes the wretched man he really was.

But the word from the police—for he never doubted that

he would receive one—when would it come and what would it bring? Was it even now on its way, and was it to be his fate to watch for the return of life to one under actual arrest? He felt he could not bear that. He would have to rely on the strength of someone else for a duty demanding so much nerve and self-control. Rising to his feet, he stumbled from the side of the bed. He would watch her from the other end of the room.

Tick, tick, tick, tick! It was the language of the clock on the mantel, counting out moments that held no hope. Tick, tick, tick, tick! for sixty minutes and for sixty minutes and for sixty minutes more. Then——

"A gentleman to see you, sir!"

How he got downstairs he never knew, but he found himself below welcoming—Mr. Gretorex. The servant who had announced him was new in the family. Of course, this was a person who could not be ignored; but with what words he met him, talked to him. and finally bowed him out of the house, he had no recollection an instant after they were uttered. All he remembered was that his reputed father-in-law looked a little puzzled as he went out. Then, before Dr. Cameron could close the front door, came a flutter of skirts up the steps, and a bouquet of flowers was thrust into his hand, and soft, feminine voices were asking how dear Mrs. Cameron was to-day; in the midst of which he felt a cold shiver seize him, and, turning, saw standing in the hall behind him, just as if he had always stood there, Mr. Gryce.

He answered the ladies; he made them his best bow, and, with the bouquet in his hand, stepped back into the hall.

"You have seen Molesworth?" he managed to say, looking at the detective.

The other stared into his hat, which he held in his hand, but made no direct reply.

"The inspector is very busy this morning," he announced; "can you come down to police headquarters? There are a few words he would like to say to you."

"He has only to command," returned the doctor; but he went as to his execution.

He had expected to be confronted with Molesworth, but, on the contrary, he found the inspector quite alone.

"Ah, Cameron," remarked that gentleman, as he entered, "so you had a taste of the storm where you were. Remark-

able experience, wasn't it?" Then, without further delay, observed, "So you could make nothing out of Molesworth? Well, I am not surprised; you went at it probably in the wrong way."

"There is no doubt about that," Dr. Cameron returned. "I do not pretend to be a detective, and could only show my——"

"I know," interrupted the inspector, gently. "What I meant was, that you probably expected him to tell you whether Genevieve Gretorex gave to Mildred Farley the poison which she drank. Now, that is a question he could not answer. But what he could have told you was——"

"What?" The doctor spoke tremulously, for the inspector had a strange look on his face.

The latter hesitated; he had evidently purposed saying something vital, but thought better of it at present, and produced some papers from his desk instead.

"Dr. Cameron," he began, glancing at these papers as he talked, "do you remember, in our last interview, urging various arguments in proof that Genevieve Gretorex could not, in reason, have committed the crime imputed to her?"

Dr. Cameron bowed his head.

"Well, Mr. Gryce made a note of these, and of some other things you said at that time; and I would be obliged to you if you would glance them over to refresh your mind, and prepare yourself for something I am going to say."

"But——"

"I know you are suffering, and that it will be kindness to you to cut short your suspense, but—the words are not many; read them, Dr. Cameron, read them," and he thrust the paper into the doctor's hand.

But, though the latter looked at it with great earnestness, he evidently received no impression from the words before him, and the inspector, seeing this, took the paper away again, saying,—

"You shall see it later. It will, perhaps, be better for me now to tell you that from the facts and arguments you adduced at our last meeting, we have come to the conclusion that Genevieve Gretorex was not accountable for the death that took place in her room. That she neither gave poison nor profited by its use; that she was a victim, and that the woman you married——"

He stopped, eyed the doctor, who was trembling like an aspen, and glowing like a being suddenly lifted out of hell into heaven.

"You never got that from any arguments I used," cried the doctor. "You have seen Molesworth, and he——"

But the inspector interposed, gravely,—

"Yes, we have seen Molesworth, but he added little to the knowledge we had. No, no; it was your admissions which proved to us that Genevieve Gretorex is innocent. And yet," he went on, checking the doctor's joy with a sudden look, "we cannot offer you our congratulations; for with this conviction comes the painful alternative that she is only so because it was not the substitute and prototype of your betrothed bride that perished in that hour, but the bride herself, and that the woman you call your wife, and who now lies under the surveillance of the police, is not the elegant and fastidious heiress of Mr. Gretorex, but—bear up, Cameron, there is hope for you in all this—the able, ardent, and aspiring Mildred Farley!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LAST HOPE.

THE blow had fallen; it had been long delayed, but it had come at last, and for a moment Dr. Cameron looked crushed. Then he recovered himself and said, though somewhat faintly,—

"This is surmise on your part; you have no proof that such is the fact?"

"No actual proof, no; but plenty of what you might call circumstantial. The fact that Mrs. Cameron has not been known to write a word since her marriage is one."

The doctor gave a gasp of dismay. Though he had never thought of it in that light, it was undoubtedly true that she had avoided every opportunity for showing her handwriting. Yet he said,—

"She has had the rheumatism. She——"

"She has had anything that would serve as an excuse for suppressing such tokens of the stupendous fraud she was practising as would have been afforded by the not-to-be-concealed difference between her handwriting and that of the

lady she was personating. But we will not press that matter now. Hear your own words, and see if you can explain by any other theory the facts which you have yourself observed in reference to this affair." And the inspector, taking up the paper he had before handed to the doctor, observed, "The main argument used by you in defence of Genevieve Gretorex's innocence when you thought Genevieve Gretorex your wife is the fact that sufficient time did not elapse after the death of the other for that interchange of clothing necessitated by the situation. These are your words :

" '*To undress an inanimate body down to the last detail and then to put upon it again, article after article of her own clothing.—Why she had not the time, not if she worked with lightning fingers and unerring touch.*

" '*When we think of the length of time usually spent by women upon such matters, and recall the fact that in the appearance of neither were there any signs of hurry or neglect, we can draw but one conclusion.*'

"And what is that?" suggested the inspector. "Why that the clothing found upon the corpse was the same which she had worn in life. That the girls made no interchange of garments, and that consequently the woman you married was the same you saw in her bridal garments when you first came to the house; viz., Mildred Farley. It is not the conclusion you drew, but is it not the only sensible one?"

Dr. Cameron could not say no.

"For," pursued the inspector, "if there was not time for one pair of hands to do all the dressing and undressing required if death came before the change of garments had been effected, neither was there time for it had it been attempted when both pairs of hands could have been employed. A bride cannot be arrayed in a moment, and, as you say, both women were dressed with the utmost nicety and care. But there is another fact I ask you to consider. I again quote your own words :

" '*She*'—that is the woman now bearing your name—'*is disappointed in Miss Foote*' (Miss Gretorex's most intimate friend, you remember) '*and will not receive her nor talk about her.*' A strange freak, doctor, if your wife was Miss Gretorex, but a most natural precaution if she were Mildred Farley. For parents such as Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex—adopted parents,

remember, and of a most formal type—could be more easily hoodwinked than an intimate school-friend, versed in every secret of the other's heart."

The doctor could not deny this either.

"Then the freshness and ardour of your wife, Dr. Cameron. Were they those of a woman accustomed to the triumphs and gaieties of society? Listen:

"'*There was a time in Washington when she seemed more alive and eager in her enjoyments than ever before in my experience of her.*' Your experience had been with Miss Gretorex, you will not forget. '*She glowed with pride and joy as she could not have done if she had*'—been, let me add, the woman called Genevieve Gretorex, baffled in her love, and wearied by a lifetime of social excitements and follies."

And the doctor, seeing before him the beaming picture of his wife as she looked in those few days, was silent still, asking himself if the confusion under which he laboured was that of reality, or of a dream from which he would yet awake.

The inspector spoke again.

"Forgive me for advancing one last and final argument which seems to me still more convincing than the others. It is in reference to Dr. Molesworth:

"'*If she worried about him, it was only such wôrry as any woman would experience who felt she had led an innocent man into a dangerous trap from which her own safety forbade her to release him.*' A condition of mind arguing a peculiar coldness if she was the woman who had once loved him, but not so peculiar if she were simply his friend and acquaintance, Mildred Farley."

"But——"

"Wait; hear one quotation more.

"'*From the hour Miss Gretorex became my wife I saw nothing to arouse my jealousy; nor can I, in looking back, now remember a look or word which would add fuel to the fire you seem anxious to kindle.*'

"Those are your words, Dr. Cameron, and they best explain why I pressed you so hard at that time for some confession which would refute the suspicion which your conversation had involuntarily caused in the minds of Mr. Gryce and myself. For if you had married the woman you supposed, some tokens of her late passion must have been observable in her, and from the fact that you detected none, we were

forced, and are forced still, notwithstanding her success, and the merely vague doubts which some subtle difference in her has aroused in the breasts of her friends, to believe that what I stated to you in the beginning of this interview is true: That the woman who perished, and upon whose body the inquest was held, was she to whom you were engaged to be married, while she who bears your name, and holds with such confidence and power that other's position before the world, is simply her sister Mildred, whose willingness to assume that position and astonishing aptitude for it, we have Miss Gretorex's own words to show. Is the discovery too humiliating, Dr. Cameron, or have you any such evidence as her possession of Miss Gretorex's accomplishments, to prove that we have made a mistake, and that our conclusions are false?"

On the contrary, at that word accomplishments, Dr. Cameron recalled how Genevieve (he had no other name for her) had always found some excuse for not exercising her supposed talents as a singer and player. He had not wondered at the time, but now! And her plea of rheumatism! how false it was; how false he had known it to be all the time! And the wedding-ring that would not fit, and her attitude towards her parents and their evident alienation from her; all these details rose before his mind's eye, to be lost and swamped in the one great fact, made, as he could now see, most of by the inspector, that this woman loved him with the fervour, freshness, and absorbing quality of a first love, which, if she were Genevieve, argued a lightness of character certainly not borne out by her general conversation and manner! And yet, how believe a fact that reversed all his ideas, and gave him for wife a woman he had never known, never courted, never asked to marry him; a woman—But here his thoughts became confused, and he turned almost helplessly towards the inspector.

"You see it is not a question to be answered in an instant," remarked that gentleman, with sympathetic earnestness.

"I do not attempt to answer it—I shall not. When Genevieve—Mrs. Cameron, has reached a condition in which it will be safe for me to put a such question, I will ask her to tell me the truth, and she will do it."

"You think so? Well, that might do if it were yourself only who must be satisfied; but unhappily there is the police, and I do not think we should feel the question fully settled by this means."

"Not if she acknowledged she was Mildred Farley?"

"Not if she acknowledged she was Mildred Farley. It might be a ruse on the part of Genevieve Gretorex to escape from what she must consider Genevieve Gretorex's anomalous position. A woman who could do what this woman did, be she Genevieve or Mildred, has passed beyond the bounds where her mere word may be relied upon."

The doctor knew it.

"Then what would you do?" asked he.

The inspector looked at him gravely, saw that his anxiety was not to be tampered with, and remarked,—

"You have forgotten that Dr. Molesworth must know whose body it was that he carried off in his phaeton."

Dr. Cameron had been sitting; he immediately bounded to his feet.

"Yes," he cried, "Molesworth! Let us go to him. He will tell me——" But at this point his enthusiasm paled. A thought had struck him. "Molesworth did great things for the woman who married me," he declared. "Would he have done so much for Mildred Farley? Must it not have been Genevieve Gretorex whose helplessness he pitied, and for whose safety and content he was willing to incur the risk and endure the not too agreeable sensations of carrying a dead body out of a house in his arms?"

But the inspector shook his head. "I am not so sure of that," he rejoined. "Some men will do more for friendship than for love. Besides, a woman who had deceived his hopes and fled from a marriage with him to unite herself to another, would not awaken the same sympathy in him that Mildred Farley might."

"You have seen him; you have talked with him; he has confessed to you."

"No; Dr. Molesworth would not answer any questions last night. He was sick, or appeared so—very sick I should say."

Dr. Cameron thought of the look he had last seen upon his new friend's face, and wondered if, out of consideration for himself, Dr. Molesworth had been suppressing symptoms which he knew were tending towards serious illness.

"He was in the water, Q informed me, on that coldest of cold days; and this, with the privations you have suffered, may have occasioned disease. But he may also be attempting some trick upon us, and to make sure this is not so, I think

it better for you to accompany me in my next visit. Are you ready to go?"

Was he not? Upon Molesworth now depended all his hope. He alone could satisfy him concerning a fact which meant everything to him. He followed the inspector with alacrity, and they proceeded at once to Mrs. Olney's house.

Why was it that the doctor's heart sank as he approached, till the very house-front looked repellent and uncommunicative. Was not Molesworth his friend, and would he not see that a doubt like this must be settled, no matter what the consequences? He hurried forward as he reached the steps, but faltered when it came to ringing the bell. The inspector, however, did this for him, and when the door was opened, put the question which elicited the reply:

"Oh, he is much worse this morning, sir. The doctor we called in says he is afraid he will not last through the day."

Struck to his very heart of hearts, Dr. Cameron reeled where he stood, but only for a moment; the next he was on the threshold of Molesworth's room.

Mrs. Olney met him before he could pass within.

"Oh!" she cried, "he has been calling for you. Not an hour of the night but he has murmured your name. He is very ill, and does not know the face of anyone who goes near him. To think he should have come back for this."

Cold as stone, and with a heart like lead, Dr. Cameron stepped by her and approached the bed. Good God! Was this the same man he had parted from yesterday. He could not believe his eyes; he could not believe his understanding. He stared at the poor, hollow-eyed, delirious creature before him, and had neither words nor thoughts. He was only conscious of hopes that went down, down, down!

"It is a bad case of acute pneumonia," whispered a soft voice into his ear. "If he rallies again it will be only for a few minutes. Nothing short of his own skill could save him, and that he will never be able to exercise again. Don't you agree with me, sir? His pulse is so-and-so, and his temperature——"

If answer was expected, it did not come. Dr. Cameron did not even know who spoke to him.

"Julius?" he whispered, "Julius, do you not know *me*, Walter Cameron?"

But the wild, feverish eyes had no understanding in them,

and neither turned nor softened at this passionate appeal. Frantically the doctor rose to his feet and approached the inspector.

"He is slipping from us," he cried, "and we shall never know the secret he conceals in his heart. Will you stay with me till this belief becomes certainty, or can you trust me to watch by his side alone?"

"Gryce is here," answered the inspector. "He has been with him, I believe, all night. He will stay with you."

The doctor hastened at once to the telephone. Having been put in communication with his own home, he asked for news, and receiving answer that his wife's condition remained unchanged, gave orders that he was to be informed if she showed any signs of returning consciousness. Then he went back to Molesworth's side.

"He does not know you," whispered Mrs. Olney, "and yet he seems quieter since you came in. Hark! there he is calling your name again."

And sure enough, a piteous "Walter! Walter Cameron!" broke that moment from the sick man's lips, and going to the heart of the watcher, brought the tears to those stern eyes, which all his own woes had not been able to call forth.

And thus, for a couple of hours, when without warning there came a change; and the dying man, looking up, knew Cameron, and breathed a soft sigh that sounded so natural that the latter took heart, and bending over him said:

"You have something to tell me, Julius. It will take but one breath, and will make me your debtor for ever. Which sister did I marry? Answer me that, dear friend, and I will ask you nothing more!"

And for a moment it seemed as if the sick man would answer; for he opened his lips and endeavoured to speak, but failed.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" cried Dr. Cameron, in despair; "must I see him die with that one word unsaid? Julius! Julius! you can lift your hand. If it is Genevieve Gretorex who is now my wife, raise your right hand."

It did not move.

"If it is Mildred Farley, raise your left."

That did not move.

"Cannot you tell me," pursued Cameron, wildly, "or will you not? You say you love me—show it now. Your right hand, Molesworth, or your left? Genevieve or Mildred, which is it?"

But though a strange, yearning look came into the dying

man's face, he did not stir; and the doctor seeing it, desisted from his efforts, and put, as it were, all selfish thoughts away from between them, and bending down, reverently kissed the forehead, damp now with the dews of death.

A thrill that seemed to have nothing but happiness in it, passed through the outstretched form. The hand he had refused to move passed slowly towards Walter, and gave it one earnest pressure; then the deep, unreadable eyes faintly closed, as it were, for ever, when Dr. Cameron, stooping nearer, murmured in his ear:

"Bridget Halloran walked the length of the ward for the first time to-day, and *you* have received the credit."

Instantly a smile shone out on those pale lips, and the eyes opened again with a look that Dr. Cameron was in vain trying to read, when a well-known voice murmured slowly and solemnly in his ear:

"It is all over, doctor; we must find some other way of getting at the truth you want."

CHAPTER XL.

THE GREAT QUESTION.

"SOME other way? what other way?" A little time had passed, and Dr. Cameron stood in the parlour alone with Mr. Gryce.

The detective meditated. He had passed his prime, but he was the great Gryce yet. How should he find his way out of this difficulty.

"I cannot wait," pursued the doctor, "for the slow process of comparison and investigation. I must know at once and without a doubt whom I have been cherishing in my bosom."

"And we," subjoined the other, "must also know." And his tone became curt and business-like. "What was the last word from your home?" he asked.

"That my wife had moved again, but slightly."

An expression passed over the detective's face, which, if it had been seen by those who knew him best, would certainly have aroused great curiosity and interest. For he only looked thus when he had made some famous discovery, or originated some deep-laid plan calculated to settle a vexed question.

"You want to know," he cried, "how we can all be satisfied

as to which of the sisters you have under your roof in the person of Mrs. Cameron?"

"Yes."

"I will tell you."

And leaning forward he whispered some earnest and impressive words into the doctor's ear.

CHAPTER XLI.

GRYCE REDEEMS HIMSELF.

WHAT is this? Have we not left Mrs. Olney's, and have we not returned to Dr. Cameron's house and entered Mrs. Cameron's room? Yes, but something has occurred here,—changes have taken place, unaccountable changes to one who has not the clue to the situation. For while the walls, the ceiling, the fire-place and doors, are those we have been accustomed to see in Mrs. Cameron's apartment, the carpet which had been laid between the window and the bed, the curtains which shut off the light and make a semi-darkness in the room, even the bed with its coverlids and pillows are not only different from those in use here before, but are so strangely out of keeping with the general furnishing of this house of dainty appointments that we are dazed, and do not know what to make of it all till we suddenly recognize a picture that has displaced an exquisite madonna on the wall directly opposite the bed, and perceive that we have the surroundings and almost the look of that room in Mrs. Olney's house which we have been told was the one which had formerly held Mrs. Farley and her daughter. The illusion is so complete, owing to the use of a screen which has been placed at the side of the bed in a way to cut off the view of the fire-place and such portions of the room as were out of harmony with this idea, that we are not at all astonished to see Mildred's little stand, with her favourite books and knick-knacks upon it, and close by, with her plain, benevolent face turned towards the silent form still stretched in its old quietude on the changed bed, the figure of Mrs. Olney herself, gazing with watchful eye and eager interest at the countenance, which to all glances but her own, looks out of place upon these coarse pillows, and amid belongings so poor and common.

For in the dimness made by the curtains and the fast-

approaching nightfall, two other forms can be faintly seen, waiting, as all things in the world seem to wait at such a moment, for the renewed stir in those quiescent limbs and fallen eyelids, which would tell of life returned to this long unconscious body. They were those of Dr. Cameron and Mr. Gryce, and it would be hard to tell which countenance betrayed the most intent interest, though there would have been no difficulty in determining which had the husband's anxiety at heart and which the detective's. The hour was six, and the silence something appalling. In it you could hear but one sound—the beating of the doctor's heart.

"You said that the powder you gave her would lose its effect in forty minutes," whispered Mr. Gryce in the ear of his companion, as he quietly replaced the watch he had just consulted. "Those minutes are up, sir."

A long-drawn sigh answered him. It came not from the doctor who had simply shivered, but from the bed. Mrs. Olney leaned forward till her lips almost touched the sick woman's forehead, and the word she uttered was,—

"Mildred!"

The beating of Dr. Cameron's heart stopped, he strained his ears for the answer or exclamation which was to tell so much.

"Mildred!" Mrs. Olney again breathed.

"Oh!" came in a soft lingering note from the bed, then two dark eyes suddenly unclosed, and fixing themselves upon the face bent over them, slowly smiled as much as to say, "I am here." But in another instant a shudder went through that exhausted frame and those two eyes, wild now, and unutterably searching, flew from object to object about her, then back to Mrs. Olney, who, perfect in her lesson, gave her an affectionate look, and remarked quietly, "You have been ill, dear, very ill."

At which Mrs. Cameron looked again at the bed, then at the little faded shawl which had been pinned about her shoulders, and lastly at her hands from which all her rings had been taken, and cried in sudden anguish,—

"Is it a dream then? Is there no Genevieve, no Walter, and am I *only* Mildred Farley?"

The sound of a step, the smell of some pungent odour about the bed-head, and Mrs. Olney found it unnecessary to answer; unconsciousness had settled again upon the partially awakened woman.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE QUESTION SETTLED.

"I DO not care for compliments, sir." And yet the detective looked decidedly gratified notwithstanding. "I merely wished to satisfy you and satisfy myself that it was not the adopted daughter of Mr. Gretorex whom you had made your wife. The experiment was satisfactory? You are thoroughly convinced?"

"I was convinced before. I have never had more than a passing doubt from the moment this possibility was suggested to me. There were too many facts in the past to confirm it; petty facts, ignored at the time, but showing themselves now in their true light as the way-marks of great and skilfully carried out deception. Her ignorance, hidden under sphinx-like smiles which made it look like wisdom or, at the worst, indifference; her caprice about names which she vowed she never remembered: her professed short-sightedness; her silence when conversation was expected; her talkativeness when silence would have been more appropriate; the wit with which she parried attacks; the glance and the smile which filled all gaps and disarmed all criticism. Then the attitude she took towards Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex, leading to those rather formal relations which were her only safeguard; her refusal to visit much except where a crowd was expected, and a look was all that was required of her; and finally the excuses she always found when I pressed her to sing, or play, or write, or talk on anything but general subjects. It is all clear now, and while I wonder at her tact, I also wonder I never felt a suspicion of the truth, even when I found her so much more brilliant, gifted and beautiful than I had anticipated or had a right to anticipate from what I knew of Genevieve Gretorex."

"I do not think it strange. Your courtship had not been long enough, and you will excuse me if I say intimate enough, for you to feel confident in your knowledge of her. Then a bride is never quite what a girl is, and any caprice she might show in her present capacity could so easily be attributed to the change which matrimony invariably brings.

I do not wonder at all that you were deceived. I am only annoyed that I was."

"But you had never seen Miss Gretorex."

"I know; but a detective never excuses himself. I felt an incongruity somewhere, but I was not particular enough in asking its true meaning. I, who knew there were two of them, and also knew how much they looked alike."

"Well, I cannot see that this is strange. It would have taken a most penetrating genius to detect what escaped the eye of husband and parents."

Mr. Gryce looked as if he felt himself possessed of such a genius, but he simply observed,—

"It was all planned with consummate judgment, and I should like to know to which brain the credit of the scheme is most due. Had the expectations of Genevieve been realized, had she found an accomplice in Dr. Molesworth and been married to him, as she hoped, I do not think your honeymoon would have been interrupted by a doubt. Only when you came to know your wife better you might have wondered at certain defects in her, but you would by that time have become so accustomed to them that you would have passed them off as many people are passing off her eccentricities to-day, by the simple phrase, 'Genevieve is changed; she is not what she used to be,' adding, possibly, in your own mind, 'It is not the first time a woman has dropped her music after marriage.'"

"True, true; and I will acknowledge now, that I can hardly remember the Genevieve Gretorex I courted, for this dazzling, fresh creature who has taken her place. Deceitfully, I own, but with no wicked impulses to make that deceit an entirely unpardonable one."

Somewhat astonished, Mr. Gryce drew back. "You seem relieved," he remarked, "by this discovery which we have made."

"I am. How can I help it, when it gives me a wife uncontaminated by a mad, if innocent passion for another man."

"But—a—a——"

"Dressmaker you would say. I know; but also Genevieve's sister, and her superior in intellect, beauty, and I dare to hope, worth," interjected the doctor. "For though she entered into this fraud without seeming compunction, she has since given signs of honest repentance for the wrong she has done, and with it shown such affection for the man she has de-

ceived, that I am sure she needs nothing but a show of considerate feeling on my part to develop into a woman I can not only love but respect."

Mr. Gryce came forward again.

"You make my duty very hard," said he.

"Your duty?"

"You seem to think the whole matter is settled by this discovery of Mrs. Cameron's real identity, and that you have nothing before you but a reconciliation with your wife."

Dr. Cameron uttered an ejaculation. "And do you mean to say that you still retain the suspicions you entertained of her when you thought her the maddened and desperate daughter of Mr. Gretorex?"

The detective sighed; he was evidently weary of the tormentor's part he had had to play so long.

"I should have thought," he observed, gently, "that you would have perceived without my aid, that the suspicions already attached to your wife by the police would be heightened rather than diminished by the discovery that it was Genevieve Gretorex's substitute who survived to marry you instead of Genevieve herself."

"I had not looked at it so. I felt so sure this was her great secret that I never questioned her as to whether she possessed another."

"I wish that we were not obliged to. But when we think of the circumstances and consider the temptation she was under, we dare not let the matter slide without a legal investigation. For if Miss Gretorex had sufficient determination to undertake the re-establishment of herself as Mr. Gretorex's daughter and your bride, she certainly had enough to carry the undertaking through if she had not been stopped in some forcible way by Mildred. She did not carry it through. What then are we to think? That she threw away her life to please a sister's whim, or that that sister found some way of inducing the death which left her in the enviable position she had assumed."

There could be but one answer.

"The poison was Genevieves. It was in a casket in Genevieve's drawer. Is it credible that Mildred would know this, or knowing it be able to use it upon Genevieve without that person perceiving what was being given her to drink?"

"It is the weak point. In opposition to it we offer but one

suggestion. Molesworth, who was the first on the scene, and who from his services seems to have understood the situation, showed the determination and forethought we would expect from a man desirous of concealing a murder. His whole action shows that he thought Mildred Farley had committed a crime, and if *he* thought so——"

"We do not know what he thought; we can never take his thoughts into account; he is dead and we have no record of his beliefs," asserted Dr. Cameron boldly. But the blow had told; *he* knew—who so well—that Molesworth was afraid to communicate to him the truth as to the identity of his wife, and what could this fear argue but a belief in the guilt which this discovery would make apparent.

"We will not argue the question any further, Dr. Cameron," the detective now declared. "While there were doubts as to my duty, I was willing and more than willing to talk; but now that I see my way pretty clear, I have no desire to say anything more, and would advise you, as a friend, to say nothing more either."

This was a new tone for the detective to take, and it struck Dr. Cameron forcibly. He saw that whatever his own convictions might be, whatever the truth even, she held in the eyes of the police at least, the position of a possible criminal, and must ever hold it now that her only witness had perished, unless by some decisive action of his, the terrific question could be at once and for ever settled. Looking at Mr. Gryce, and seeing how sober he had become, he took his resolve.

"*I* have an experiment to try," said he. "You have made your test, and satisfied us all that Mrs. Cameron's maiden name was Mildred Farley. *I* would like the same opportunity of proving to you that though she took her sister's place and identity, she did not take her life. Will you come upstairs again, Mr. Gryce?"

But the detective hesitated.

"I know what you contemplate," he affirmed, "and would advise you to pause. It is a risky thing you are going to do. Besides, as the lady is not necessarily your wife——"

"What?"

"No court in the country would hold you to a marriage forced upon you by such fraud."

The doctor flushed, looked away, and for a moment was silent. Then he declared firmly:

"She is my wife; I accept her as such, however my experiment ends. I should have no right to make it, did I not expect to share the consequences of it with her."

Mr. Gryce took off his hat. Was it in deference? or because he had determined to stay? Both, perhaps.

"Then you are resolved, knowing that in doing this you make a witness of me?"

"Yes, for I believe in her innocence, and must have it established before the world." And he led Mr. Gryce back into his wife's room, saying, "I will not keep you waiting long. The effects of the drug I administered to her must have nearly passed away."

The scene to which they thus returned was not that of a few minutes ago. The poor and sordid furniture had been removed, and the rich and stately belongings of the room restored. The form of Mrs. Olney had been replaced by that of the nurse, and nowhere was there to be seen the least token of that strange and remarkable transformation which had deceived the half-wakened woman into a belief that she was a girl again. Even the rings had been restored to her hands, and on the table near by ticked the watch which her husband had given her in those happy days in Washington. As for herself, she lay quiet, though her eyelids fluttered faintly, and now and then her limbs moved as if she were in grief or pain.

"I will sit here," asserted the doctor, going up to the nurse and motioning her to one side. Then taking her place, he drew his wife's right hand in his, and pressing it slightly, watched the effect with a steady look, from which he had suppressed every expression save that of gentleness and love.

The touch seemed to awaken the slumbering life within her. Opening her eyes, she fixed them with a wild stare on his face that preserved its loving look, though his heart was in a turmoil of wild and contradictory emotions.

"Oh!" came from her lips in a long, low and rapturous sigh, "It was not, then, a dream. I am your wife; you are my husband, and——" Realization came to her; there were terrors in her soul as well as pleasures; life was not simply love; she shuddered, and the colour which had crept warmly into her cheeks vanished, as if the breath mingling with hers had been of ice.

The doctor, watching, held her gaze fascinated by his,

"Are you better, *Mildred?*" he asked.

At that name, uttered by him, a cry, sharp as despair, rang startlingly out from her lips, and she half rose, but in her weakness fell back. Dr. Cameron stole a look at the detective, standing still and attentive in the deepest shadow on the other side of the bed.

"You know, then?" she murmured, feebly.

"Yes," was his answer, "I know that you were never Genevieve Gretorex; that you are, instead, her sister, Mildred Farley; and though I blame you for the deception, and wonder at the ambition which prompted it, I love you still, and am ready to forgive you."

A smile, a flash, a look of joy, unmixed and unmistakable, brought the old splendour for a moment to her face.

"Then have I nothing more to ask in this world," she cried; "my troubles are all over. And oh, how I have trembled lest you should hate and repudiate me when you found that I had gained your name by a fraud." And two great tears crept from between her closing eyelids, and rolled slowly down her cheeks. "Let me thank God!" she breathed, and tried to put her two hands together but was too weak, so only smiled.

As for the doctor, he crushed back the tears that were rising to his own eyes, and looking at her tenderly, said:

"And is this the only trouble you have had? Was there no other anxiety or fear on your mind?"

"Why, no. What other could I have? Was not that enough? To lose your love—— Oh, Walter, you do not know what that love is to me! But I will show you, if I live; I will show you yet."

And raising her heavy lids, she looked at him with so much frankness, earnestness, and truth, that the doctor rose, triumphant, and glanced across at the place where Mr. Gryce had stood.

But that gentleman had shifted his position and now stood at the door, hat in hand.

"I beg leave to bid you good evening," he observed, as he felt the doctor's eyes fall on him. "If you have any further business with me, let me know. I feel that I have no more with you, and now let me offer you my congratulations."

And with the most benevolent of nods, he turned his broad back upon the happy husband and wife, and silently slipped from the house.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DOORS SWUNG BACK.

Some six weeks later, Mr. Gryce received the following communication :—

"During the last few days, I have been told by my husband of the fearful suspicion which my conduct had given rise to in the minds of the police. Though I have done much that was blame-worthy, and am in no degree worthy of the happiness which has fallen to my lot, I did no wrong to my sister, nor could I have done any, though consequences worse than any I anticipated had followed the disappointment of her return. To convince you of this I write these explanations, for though I can have no hope of regaining your regard, I certainly may expect from you that just estimate of my character, which is due to the wife of so noble a man as Walter Cameron.

"I was never happy as a girl. Born with an ambitious spirit, and a strong taste for all that is elegant and inspiring in life, I not only was prevented by poverty from indulging in any of my numerous aspirations, but was kept back from that culture of my own powers, which is torture to one who feels her capabilities, but is denied all opportunity of exercising them. Then, I had to work and work hard, and though it was a labour of love, I could not rid myself of the feeling that I ought not to be subjected to so many sacrifices; that I was fitted for better things, and was in a measure trod upon.

"For I knew that a sister, so like myself that our mother could see no physical difference between us, was in the direct possession of those very things for which my whole soul longed. She had wealth, she had leisure, she had accomplishments, she had love. She rode in a carriage, while I walked dismally on foot. She entered, as a welcome guest, houses which were palaces of romance to me, as remote and inaccessible as though they were the habitations of the gods. And yet her look was my look, her figure my figure; or so my mother had informed me in a moment of confidence that seemed to change my whole nature. For she told me something more. How, in that hour which robbed her of one of

her darlings, it had been my little form she had laid nearest to the grasp of the rich lady, and how that lady instead of taking me had leaned over and picked up my sister, though that sister was no prettier, no larger, and no more promising than myself. And thinking of this, and brooding over it at my work, I grew to feel that my sister was a usurper; that she had no right to the place she held; that it was mine, and that if my mother's intentions had been carried out, it would be I and not she who would be in possession of the heiress's place, enjoying all those pleasures that to my girlish understanding were magnified into ecstasies by the contrast they afforded to my daily occupations and tasks.

"But, though I suffered from these longings and experienced this envy, you must not think I neglected my mother or dreamed of any change as regarded my sister or myself. I did not even try to see that sister, though I wasted many hours that should have been spent in sleep, in dreaming over her joys and mentally comparing her situation with my own. The truth is, I could not have found her except by means from which I naturally shrank; for though my mother had told me she lived in town, and was one of the elegant ladies I sometimes saw crowding into the theatres or opera-houses, she had never told me her name or given me any hint as to what part of the city held her home.

"I was therefore greatly surprised, and very much dazzled, when one day she said to me that she could not die without embracing both her children; that though she had taken an oath never to intrude upon the child she had given away, yet her longing was so great that she was determined not only to see her child, but to reveal to her the relationship in which they stood.

"'But,' I exclaimed, dimly conscious that such an act would entail consequences of whose importance we could not at that moment judge, 'if she does not know her true history, you will give her a great shock. She probably loves the lady whom she regards as her mother.'

"'I am her mother,' was the answer I received. 'She must love me; I will no longer allow her to lavish upon that other woman the feelings that are my right.' And being weak she went into wild hysterics, and would not be pacified till I had promised to assist her to an interview with her lost child.

"Then was it that I learned, for the first time, my sister's name and where she lived; and the knowledge being supplemented by the information that she was on the point of being married, I thought I saw my way clear to an interview. I told my mother how I proposed to introduce myself to my sister's presence. She approved of my plan and did not allow much time to elapse before sending me to St. Nicholas Place.

"I went in my own proper character as a dressmaker, but I wore a thick veil which completely hid my features, being well aware what a disturbance my appearance would cause at her doors if the resemblance between us was as great as my mother had told me. Asking to see Miss Gretorex, I was taken at once to her room, and with no true conception of the shock which the sight of its occupant would necessarily occasion me, knocked and was admitted.

"Shall I ever forget that moment? The beauty, the brilliance, the cheer of that dainty room, and before me, standing in an attitude that betrayed a perfect familiarity with all these gorgeous surroundings, *myself*, in all but costume and a certain delicacy of breeding which in that one instant of deep emotion went like a dagger to my heart, so ardently had I longed for just such an air and just such a culture! The words of my mother had prepared me for a likeness, but not for such an absolute one. Or rather, no one's words could prepare a woman for seeing unmoved a reproduction of herself in living flesh and blood. And when after the first agitation, which was happily hid by my veil, I had an opportunity for studying her closer; I was yet more astonished if less shocked, to notice how her very tricks of manner were familiar, and how often she used her hands in just such a way as I have seen myself do a thousand times. Yet she was a lady, high-bred to her very finger-ends, while I was simply well-bred and full of ambition to be what I, in that moment, saw exemplified before me. Our heights were the same, but when afterwards I came to measure her, I perceived that I was just an inch larger about the waist.

Seeing me, as she thought, embarrassed, she spoke first. The voice dumbfounded me. There was a cadence in it which was lacking in my own, and yet it was like catching the notes of some of those speeches I used frequently to make to myself in the long hours of solitary sewing. It impressed me so, I hesitated to answer.

"'You have some request to make,' she now said. 'What is it? I am in a mood to be gracious,' and she smiled, but so coldly I asked myself if my face lighted up no more when I was happy. Alas! I did not know then that she was only indifferently so, and that the joys I supposed made her heart beat with rapture from day to day, had grown more stale and uninteresting to her enervated mind than ever my work had done to me, notwithstanding I hated it and was, perhaps, as far as disposition goes, above it and its perpetual grind.

"But this is telling what I felt, not what I replied. For I answered this question, making her start a little at my first tones, and informing her I was a dressmaker, I asked for some of her work. I have before related this scene, but I did not at that time cling absolutely to the truth. I had a tremendous secret to conceal, and knew no other way of doing so than by assuming Genevieve's past as I had already assumed her present. But at this hour there no longer remains the least motive for concealing or misinterpreting anything connected with this matter, and I beg you to consider what I say as truth, notwithstanding the blur that lies over my honesty, from the false tales I told before I realized how I was shaking my husband's confidence in me by such methods.

"To Genevieve, then, my first words were regarding work; but when I saw that she would never give me this without her sympathies were in some way enlisted, I ceased speaking of my qualifications as a dressmaker and entered upon my personal history. I began by telling her that I had a sick mother, and that that mother had an inconsolable grief; that she pined for a child who did not even know she had such a mother in existence. And with this for a text I told the whole story, with just an omission of names, watching her face for the dawning realization which I anticipated seeing there. But it did not come. She listened patiently as she had probably done a hundred times before, to what she considered a tale of distress, and not till I asked her, in what I meant to be a significant tone, whether she knew any young lady in her own social circle to whom these facts could apply, did she show the least agitation. Then, indeed, she did turn upon me and requested me to lift my veil, and when I ignored her demand, sat gazing with something like a wakening apprehension in her eyes.

"Then I thought the time had come to speak plainly, and laying aside all disguise, I observed simply,—

"'It is *your* mother I have been talking about, and it is your sister who is speaking to you. Pardon me if I have not broken this gently enough to you. I am little used to such matters and the secret will not stay with me. I cannot see my own flesh and blood and hold back the truth any longer.'

"And what did she say? Not what I expected. Instead of looking stunned, humiliated or angry, she merely gave me a steady glance, and asked what proof I had in support of this astounding assertion.

"'The best in the world,' I replied, and tearing off my veil I stood before her.

* * * * * *

"It was a strange experience, that interview. After the first astonishment and gush of emotion was over, she showed an unexpected interest in the situation and questioned me so fully that my stay became greatly prolonged, and I grew anxious and prayed her to let me go. But she was too much interested, and would know just how we lived, and whom we had for our friends. Then we must compare ourselves in the mirror, and try on each other's gloves, and submit to other tests to show we were precisely alike. And we found that though there was an amazing similarity in details as well as general effect, her hands were a little smaller and her dimples not so pronounced. Our feet, on the contrary, were the same size, and when she had put upon me one of her hats that was lying near, I did not know whether it was she or myself who smiled upon me from the glass.

"Meantime it appeared that she was not so much disturbed by the news as she was excited by it. She had found something to interest her, she said, and promised to go and visit her mother the next day. As for the work I wished from her I should have it, as it would give her the best excuse in the world for visiting me. And so the one sister became dress-maker to the other, and a series of visits began, destined to end in what we least expected at that hour—desperate tragedy.

"My sister had given no intimation of risking the inheritance she expected from her reputed parents by any disclosure to them of the knowledge which had been communicated to her; so that I was in no wise surprised when she appeared next day as heavily veiled as I had been in visiting her. But

what did astonish me was the eagerness with which she entered into relations that must have seemed far from elegant after her experience with the Gretorex family. Was it that in my mother's passionate embrace she felt a warmth of love that she had hitherto missed? It may be, but I rather think it was owing to the influence which Dr. Molesworth's strange sad eyes had upon her, even at that early day.

"He was my mother's physician and had been in the habit of visiting her daily. On this day he came as usual, and receiving no reply to his knock, fancied that my mother was asleep, and so opened the door softly and came in.

"The first we knew of his presence he was before us, and as we had thought the door locked, we were utterly taken by surprise, and were as we thought lost, for my sister was without her veil and I was standing by her side in a position to bring out the likeness between us to its fullest extent.

"But Genevieve, who had most to lose, showed neither chagrin or alarm. Nor when the whole matter had been explained, as it presently was by my mother, did she utter one protest or seem in any way distressed. She had looked at the doctor and he had looked at her and as the fruit of that look Genevieve Gretorex became a changed woman.

"I did not suspect it at first, but gradually the truth dawned upon me and I marvelled. For not only could I see nothing in the doctor especially attractive, but I did see in the prospect which her expected marriage opened out before her, all that a woman's heart could desire were she poor as myself or rich as my more favoured sister.

"For I was often at Mr. Gretorex's house now, and in one of my visits I had seen Dr. Cameron, and though I was too filled with the idea that he was the destined bridegroom of my sister to understand the feelings which his kind eyes and frank smile awakened, I did think that there was nothing more in the world for Genevieve to ask for, and compared more than ever her gay and glorious existence with the sad and desolate one promised me by my mother's rapidly approaching death.

"But she showed no such satisfaction with her lot, but rather looked with envy upon mine, which she called a free one. And so the days went by, and my mother's end grew near; and finally the very day came, and Genevieve did not know it, and could not come if she did, for others were

grouped about that bed, and we could not both stand there without our secret being disclosed.

"Yet I felt that my mother would never die happy without seeing her, and, loving my mother, I took at last a sudden resolve, and whispering in her ear that I would fetch her darling, I left her with a look of gratitude on her face, and going by the shortest road to Mr. Gretorex's house, happily found my sister at home. When I proposed that she should put on my cloak and hat, and thus equipped go back to my mother's side for the blessing there awaiting her, she seized upon the idea with avidity, and lost no time in carrying out this plan, though it meant the leaving of myself in her place.

"She went, and met her fate, for the doctor was in that room of death; and when all was over—for my mother died on Genevieve's breast—he took her to his heart, and told her that he loved her, and asked her to be his wife. Do not think he did this under any misapprehension as to who she was. He knew the rich woman from the poor girl, no matter in what garb she was arrayed. I say rich woman, but I do not mean that Julius Molesworth was mercenary exactly. He had no great longing for money, nor would his love have faltered if she had come to him completely penniless.

"But what he did feel was the distinction which money had created about her; the consciousness that she was a rich man's daughter, and must give up a lordly home and surroundings the most delightful if she would come to him. And his pride revelled in this thought, and created a halo about her till he thought he loved her, and, what was worse, made her think he did.

"For she loved him wholly and without any reserve, and was wretched at the prospect of keeping her engagement to Dr. Cameron, and asked me more than once if I could see any way out of it. But I could not. The preparations for her marriage were being made, and everyone looked forward to a great and splendid wedding. What else could she do but fulfil the expectations of people? And yet it all seemed dreadful; for, with a pertinacity that argued hope, she still cherished her interest in Dr. Molesworth, sending him messages, and keeping him, as it were, waiting for the answer her indecision promised. At last she told me what the situation had suggested to her. Heedless of the astonishment, the delight, the confusion into which her words threw me, she pointed out

the ease with which matters could be arranged if she were in my place and I in hers. And then, between laughter and earnest, looked at me and said,—

"'I have had my due share of what you call the pleasures of wealth. Suppose you now take yours.'

"It was a thought which at once found echo in my weak and dissatisfied breast. The old longings, the old jealousy, the old sense of having been supplanted in my rights by a freak of the woman who chose the infant whom my mother meant to keep, rushed upon me with redoubled force; and though I could not think she would lend herself seriously to such a scheme, I found myself thrilling and blushing as if it had been a reality I contemplated, instead of some humorous supposition.

"She noticed this, and laughing with the first touch of true merriment I had ever detected in her voice, proposed that we should experiment a little. So having interchanged our clothing, we subjected ourselves to the tests already described in my sister's diary, and finding them so unexpectedly successful, began to consider in real earnest the question as to whether we might not interchange positions without danger of detection.

"The idea once cherished held us enthralled. Neither could part from it, and though my risk seemed the greater, I felt within me such a glow of courage—you will probably call it presumption—that I only asked for the moment to come when I might throw aside the garb and habits of poor dreaming Mildred Farley for ever, and be in truth what I had so often seen myself in fancy, the elegant and gracious lady who called Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex father and mother, and would soon call that man of men, Dr. Cameron, by the still dearer title of husband. For I may acknowledge it now, my whole girlish fancy was filled with the image of my sister's betrothed, though I had only seen him for a few passing moments. I had that feeling for him which comes but once to a girl and woman, and though it lacked depth, as any such mere dream must do, it possessed that fervour which lends an ideal glow to the most every-day experiences. What then did it not add to that prospective moment when, under every influence calculated to charm an ambitious nature, I was to make this sudden leap from poverty to riches, labour to ease, and what moved me more than all the rest, from a state of great

insignificance to a position that would call forth every latent energy of my soul.

"My sister was equally in earnest, but had more apprehensions than I. I consequently studied to keep her spirits up, and succeeded, especially after I had had a successful interview with Mr. and Mrs. Gretorex and Dr. Cameron. This last, which we naturally dreaded most, had been a real triumph, and placed me in a condition of content that made all and everything I had to do, easy.

"You have heard already something about the final preparations we made. I will therefore add no more to this portion of my tale than the assurance that I never regarded the part I was to play, lightly. That I knew what would be required of me and did my utmost to meet those requirements. That I gave what time I had to study, and subjected myself in all regards to my sister's criticism and advice. And when, in pursuance of our plan, we stole away together, and taking rooms in a strange town, poured our souls into one another, so to speak, it was with the intent on my part to honour the position I was about to assume, with every grace and virtue of which I was capable.

"The wedding-day came, and we each started for our separate destinations. My sister was so sure of Dr. Molesworth, she thought it only necessary to let him know her intentions and where she was, for him to fly to her side with the utmost eagerness. There was therefore nothing but hope in our parting, and I shall never forget the half-amused, but wholly sympathizing smile, with which she saw me assume, even in my good-bye, the grand air I thought inseparable from Mr. Gretorex's daughter.

"I will spare you the feelings with which I rode up-town, and entered, for the first time in my new capacity of daughter and prospective bride, the spacious house in St. Nicholas Place. I had anticipated the moment so long that I found it easier than you would suppose; and yet my heart throbbed wildly under its elegant jacket as I stepped across the threshold and took up, with what grace I could, the thread which my sister had let drop when she passed so mysteriously out of that same portal a few days before.

"Trying not to notice the splendour which burst upon my view as the great door swung back, I uttered some commonplace to the cheerfully smiling butler, and then requesting

him to tell Mrs. Gretorex I had returned, went immediately upstairs to Genevieve's room.

"One of the girls followed me in. She had message after message to deliver concerning matters and things connected with the wedding, all of which I heard, and some of which I answered. Then there came an instant of solitude, in which I cast one free and delightful look about me, which, however, was soon cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Gretorex.

"I own I had one instant of doubt as I turned towards her, but it vanished in a moment, and I was able to reply to her questions, and show such interest in the presents which had come, that she forgot her displeasure at the anxiety she had been made to suffer, and entered into a conversation so animated, that the spirits I could hardly repress came so near breaking their bounds I grew alarmed at myself, and had to resort to some of Genevieve's many caprices to shorten the interview. After she was gone, I sat down, and, breathing one long breath of relief, fell to brooding—not over the jewels and innumerable treasures which in the last half-hour had become mine, but over Dr. Cameron's picture, which I had found at a glance, and which I now felt I had a right to study and admire.

"When the time came to dress, I called one of the girls into the room, but I soon dismissed her. I could not bear the presence of a stranger at such a time; besides, I wanted to take one more look at myself in the mirror, and see if I were indeed the bride which Dr. Cameron had a right to expect from that house. But when I was left alone I found so much to excite and interest me in the rapidly-growing hubbub of arriving guests, that I could barely spare myself one glimpse at the figure in the glass. But that glimpse calmed me. It was not Mildred Farley that I saw, but Genevieve Gretorex—only Genevieve Gretorex, happy, and free from certain conventional restraints.

"My husband will tell you that he saw me in this mood. He came to the door, and for one instant our eyes met in what I may safely call the most rapturous moment of my life. The next I had cast a glance down the hall, and there, in the blaze of light that was shining in every direction, I saw what I was sure for a moment must be a hallucination of my over-wrought brain, the advancing figure of Genevieve Gretorex.

"Had a lightning flash shot down through the gilded ceiling, and split open the floor at my feet, I could not have

been more overwhelmed; for I realized, as soon as I could realize anything, that she had returned to assert her rights, and that my hopes, my happiness, and my love were all at an end.

"But—and this I swear by all that is most sacred—no thought of evil to her ever crossed my mind, even after she had entered the room, and stood face to face with the awful question between us as to which was to go out of that room as the bride.

"I was crushed, and must have looked at her with a terrible appeal in my eyes, for she cried, suddenly, 'I did not think how you would feel, Mildred,' and hesitated, and drooped her head so miserably, I asked, very tremulously, no doubt,—

"'What has happened? Did he not come? Did he——'

"But she interrupted me in a harsh and grating tone which showed that her whole nature had undergone a change.

"'Don't speak of him. He is without soul, without understanding.' The words sounded as if torn from her. 'He has no sympathy with my sacrifice. It was not myself, but Mr. Gretorex's daughter that he loved. I am done with him; done, done, done.'

"I did not attempt to speak, but mechanically glanced at the clock.

"'Oh, there is time,' she cried; 'there must be time. You will not stand in my way. You will give me back myself, and when I am married and my own mistress, you shall be my sister and constant companion. Whatever luxury I own shall be yours, and not a want shall you express which I will not seek to gratify.'

"Ah, then I knew where my heart was. For this prospect of wealth did not allure me. I had lost all, and there was no charm left in the world. Stricken and humiliated, I hung down my head, the blushes almost eating me up in their force and fury.

"She stood and gazed at me with dilating eyes.

"'Oh!' she exclaimed, 'you love *him*. I shall be doing to you what has been done to me to-day. I dare not do that, I cannot; I had rather die.'

"I did not speak. I could not.

"She clasped her hands wildly round her forehead. 'O God!' she murmured, 'who would ever have thought I would come to this. One of us must be happy, and for that there is but one way.' And she passed quickly to the bureau, opened

a drawer, and took out a small casket which I knew contained her jewels.

"And still I did not speak.

"'I could never have endured it,' she now said. 'My heart and life are broken, Mildred. I thought I could go back and take up the lost thread again, and go living on contented if not happy. But it is impossible. My soul is in chaos! my every hope destroyed. Life at the best would have been wretchedness to me, and with the burden of your disappointment added.' She stopped, took something from the casket which she held in her hand. I watched her, fascinated. I did not understand her words, and I thought it was some jewel she had taken from the box.

"But she undeceived me next moment. Holding up a little phial in my sight, she said,—

"'Mildred, there is death in this. One sip, and this fearful question is settled.'

"She had it to her lips. I shrieked, but I did not know why I shrieked. Even then I had no realization of what she was doing. But when in another moment I saw the change which almost instantaneously crossed her face, I seemed to feel what that word death meant, and springing to her side, I tore the phial out of her hand and flung it down on the floor.

"'Genevieve,' I cried, 'what have you done?'

"She looked at me wildly.

"'I don't know,' she gasped, 'I—I am afraid I have spoiled all. I thought I should live to reach the street, but it acts too quickly——' She was actually sinking.

"I made a move; I am sure I made a move towards the door; but she cried out so earnestly, 'The roll in my bag, the roll, the roll,' that I turned and rushed for it, and was going to hand it to her, when she said: 'It is for him, Molesworth. Hide it, and when you can, give it to him.'

"I thrust it between the cushions of the lounge near which I stood. I was all in a daze; the room whirled about me, and I was almost mad. But I managed to reach her side just as she fell.

"'Cover me up,' she murmured. 'Go down, and let nothing stand in the way of your marriage. One—of—us—must—be—happy.'

"I thought all was over, and stood petrified, but she managed to speak again.

"'Tell him,—Julius,—that my last—words were—that he should—leave you—alone in your—happiness. That he should—help——'

"The poison had done its work. While I was thinking what folks did in such awful straits, she had suffered her last, and was quite still.

"I seemed to grow calm in an instant. She was dead, and she had said with her last breath that I was to go down at the summons, and be married. Could I? I seemed to think I could, but oh, the horror of leaving *her* there with her tell-tale face, and open, accusing eyes! That was too dreadful. I must hide this awful picture of myself, somewhere; but where? Glancing towards the alcove, my eye fell on a heap of clothing I had torn down from the closet-pegs in my hurry in dressing. I would bury her under those, and I did. Where I got the strength to do it I do not know. But in a few minutes it was done, and I stood up, seemingly alone, in that great chamber of never-to-be-forgotten horrors.

"My first act was to listen; my next to look in the mirror. The face I met was colourless, and my veil was so disarranged I had to take it off and put it on again. While I was doing this, a knock sounded on the door; the summons from my bridegroom had come.

"The next thing you will care to hear, were my thoughts when that scream was heard. I did not have any. I should have screamed myself if I had. I was being married to Dr. Cameron, and nothing must interfere with the completion of the ceremony. Afterwards—but you will let me pass over that. I was in the grasp of terror, and only looked for an opportunity to escape and solve the mystery of that scream. For I was sure I heard steps above me, and if this were true, then Genevieve had come to life again, for no one else could be there since I had locked the door when I came out, and had the key concealed in my bosom.

"So intent was I upon leaving my post, that I had turned partly around, when I saw, crossing the doorway from the front vestibule, the form and face of a man whose presence at once awoke in my terrified heart a distinct feeling of hope. They were those of Julius Molesworth.

"He was heavily muffled, and his coat-collar was drawn up about his ears, but I knew him at once, and without stopping to ask what errand had brought him to this fatal spot, I hurried

away from my bridegroom, and accosted the intruder just as he was about to enter where I was.

"'Dr. Molesworth——' I began.

"But he had his own word to say.

"'Which of you two is it? Answer at once, for if it is Genevieve——'

"But here I stopped him.

"'It is not; it is Mildred. Genevieve is upstairs—in the front room—here is the key—take it and go in—I will come immediately.'

"I forced the key upon him, I pushed him through the crowd; I saw him step his foot upon the stairs, and paused, that we might not be seen going up together. When he was at the top I tore myself away from the throng who had seized upon me the minute I stood still, and with laughter and badinage ran up after him, and joined him just as he was stepping forth again from that fatal room.

"'She is not here,' he commenced, angrily, but seeing my face he ceased, and I readily drew him back with me into the room.

"'Oh, Dr. Molesworth!' I shrieked, as the door shut, 'save me!'

"He threw back his coat, stared at me, and said again in a fierce, fiery way,—

"'Where is Genevieve?'

"I almost sank on the ground at his feet. If I had really murdered her I could not have felt more guilty than I did at that minute.

"'Do not ask me,' I murmured, 'ask yourself. You are the man who killed her. She trusted your love——'

"He had me by the arm in a terrible grip.

"'Show her to me!' were his words, 'unless you yourself are she. Are you?—are you?' he reiterated, looking in my face with something almost like frenzy in his air. 'You have on the bride's dress, and you are, I suppose, by this time Mrs. Cameron? but if you are also the woman who promised to marry me——"

"'I am not; I am the woman who loves Walter Cameron. The woman who loved you lies there.' And I tore aside the clothing that hid her and showed her poor face to his horrified gaze.

"'She preferred death to robbing me of my hopes,' I said. 'Though she came back expecting to take my place and

marry Dr. Cameron as she had agreed, such despair seized her when she saw me dressed and eager for the ceremony that she seized a bottle of poison which she had concealed in her jewel casket and emptied it at a draught.'

"He had by this time felt her pulse and smelt the poison still lingering on her lips.

"'Prussic acid,' he asserted, and rose up in a certain awful self-possession which filled me full of a new horror even while it gave me hope.

"'She died very quickly,' I now hastened to say. 'I could not have procured help, even if she had given me the opportunity of doing so. But she did not. She was too anxious that I should benefit by the sacrifice she had made. "One of us must be happy," she insisted, and her last words were, "Tell Dr. Molesworth he is not to stand in the way of your happiness but help you."'

"'Ah!' came from his lips at this, and he gave me an unfathomable look. Did he doubt me? Did any suspicion such as you have felt cross his mind? I do not think so; if it ever came—and from some hints my husband has given me concerning his after conduct I fear that it ultimately did—it was after he had had time to think of the whole matter; otherwise he could scarcely have entered into the situation as he did, or offered me so freely his aid in the awful emergency in which I found myself.

"For, with but the shortest moment given to grief, he turned upon me and asked if my secret was still safe, and when I told him it was, he said, shortly,—

"'You are in a frightful position; I see that. You have married Dr. Cameron and are expecting his presence every moment at the door. If she is seen, you are lost, for you could not bear a comparison with her, point for point, however perfectly you carry off her appearance when alone. What then, is to be done? I can see but two alternatives. Either acknowledge the whole and release the doctor—a course I certainly should advise—or you must trust me with this body to dispose of as I think fit.'

"'I cannot tell Dr. Cameron,' was my answer. 'I have married him and I mean to live with him. He would wish it if he knew. He loves me and there is no Genevieve now. I hurt no one by my action, and I save everybody from deep and lasting pain.'

"His lip, stern as iron, just quivered for a moment as if he denied this last assertion, but he said,—

"'Listen, then, I will help you, Mildred, because, hard-hearted as I am, I pity you. And this is how I propose to do it. When you are gone—you are going on a wedding-journey I presume?'

"I nodded.

"'I will carry Genevieve out, secretly if I can, openly if I must, and putting her in my phaeton, drive her to Mrs. Olney's house. My driver has charge of it now, but I will dismiss him, and by taking every precaution possible to avoid observation, I may succeed in getting away from the house unnoticed. If I do I will say she took poison on the route; if I do not—that she is ill, and that I, being a physician and her engaged husband, am taking her home. In either case I shall declare her to be Mildred Farley; and to this story I shall cling till you yourself inform me that your husband knows the truth, and that it is useless to persist in the lie any longer. Do you understand me, Mildred?'

"I signified that I did; and he went on.

"'I think I can manage it so that you will be saved from all inquiries; if I do not, remember that you are Genevieve Gretorex, and play your part well. Now, where is the bottle from which she took the acid?'

"I showed him, and he picked it up, and put it in his pocket. He had hardly done this when I heard my husband's rap.

"'Put out the light,' he motioned, 'and keep him out of the room at all hazards,' he added, in the lightest of whispers.

"I did as he bid, and succeeded in getting another moment alone with him.

"'Have you her veil?' he asked.

"I had not, and knew not where to find it.

"'I must have one,' he said, 'to throw over her face.'

"I tossed him the one I had intended to wear myself. He took it, and I hastened to gather up my own clothing and leave the room.

"When I went back again it was with Peter. Remembering that Dr. Molesworth, in all probability, knew nothing about the house we were in, I took occasion to ask this man, as he lifted up my trunk, who was in the kitchen. He answered, 'No one but the caterers, ma'am.' After which I inquired if

the backstairs were clear, and being told they were, advised him to take the trunk down that way, to which he replied that he intended to. I finished by asking him to go round with the carriage to the side entrance where I should have some money to give him. Thus I freed the back stairs and gave to Dr. Molesworth, listening near, a hint of the way he should go. I suppose he acted upon it, but never having had the opportunity to speak to him again alone, I do not know anything more about it than the rest of the world.

"Of the events following that dreadful night, you already are acquainted. From a belief that Dr. Molesworth had succeeded in his undertaking I was suddenly awakened to the consciousness that from some error in judgment, he had laid himself open to the worst kind of suspicion.

"Was it a shock do you think? And when in a still more dreadful hour that suspicion shifted to myself, and I found the secret upon which depended my honour and happiness threatened with exposure, do you wonder that my integrity succumbed to my fears?

"Driven by the instinct of self-preservation to subterfuge and prevarication, I soon found myself entangled in a network of deceit. Even when I told the truth, as I did at the time the inspector pressed me for the name of the woman who made my dresses, I followed it up by a lie to my husband. For while the half coy, half audacious admission that I had made them myself was calculated to silence the man whose questions I feared, it would hardly have helped my cause with the doctor, who had been told more than once how helpless Genevieve Gretorex was with her hands.

"And so the vain struggle went on, till it was suddenly made apparent to me that my husband's love and respect were giving way before my duplicity. Then, in an agony of remorse, I took an oath, the keeping of which ultimately brought on the revelations I feared. But I cannot regret this. It has slain my husband's love for the false Genevieve, but from the ashes of this passion I hope to see arise a love for Mildred Cameron that will in time make the happiness of my life.

"It is the aim of my existence to be henceforth worthy of that happiness."

THE END.

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